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IN FOCUS

In keeping with the fact that the Sabha is organising a Dance Symposium on "Choreography - Art of Composing Dances" to be held on November 8th & 9th 2003, the present issue carries a number of articles relating to dance and to famous dancers.

The issue starts with an article on the views of the Paramacharya on Music followed by an article on Satara Karanas by Padma Subrahmanyam with significant inputs by the Paramacharya. A scholarly article on Bharata Natyam and allied dances of South India by T.S. Parthasarathy follows. An article by Indu Raman on India's uncrowned queen of Bharata Natyam Rukmini Devi adorns this issue. This is followed by an article on Venkatalakshamma who can be characterised as one of the greatest exponents of the Mysore School of Bharata Natyam. Nalini Raghu's article on the origin and progression of the dance format makes interesting reading.

The interaction between Vidwans and Rasikas has undergone subtle transformations over the past few decades and forms the subject for an article in this issue. We continue the series on Music Appreciation. We have included two obituaries in the issue - one on Violin Vidwan Sangeetha Bhushanam T. S. Krishnaswamy who added lustre to the Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Vidyalaya and the other on Sangeetha Kalanidhi K. P. Sivanandam, a renowned Veena Vidwan.

Just before this issue was to come out of the press, it was with great regret that we received word of the passing away of Dr. V. Subramanian, President Emeritus of the Sabha, who had earlier been our President for nearly 26 years. We have included an obituary on him along with a resolution passed in the condolence meeting organised by the Sabha.

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PARAMACHARYA ON MUSIC

His Holiness Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, the Sage of Kanchi, revered as the Paramacharya of our times, is known for his masterly knowledge of music, as well as of many other subjects. He is known too for his love for listening to good music, and for his solicitude for musicians. Over the years, numerous Carnatic musicians have deemed it a great privilege to perform before him, for him. And he has honoured many by recognizing them as Asthana Vidwans of the Kanchi Kamakoti Matham.

The life-story of the sage does not disclose when and where he learnt to sing or play the veena, but he reportedly could do both. What is known is that his ancestors included both the mathematician Venkatamakhi, who formulated the 72-melakarta scheme, and his father Govinda Dikshitar, who served in the court of Achyutappa Naik and Raghunatha Naik in the 17th century.

The Paramacharya has given expression to his thoughts on the perception of music in his discourses. These discourses, in Tamil, have been published as **Deivattin Kural** - The Voice of Divinity - in six volumes; and a good part of his observations on music have been placed together in a section of Vol. III. Senior Editor P.C. Jayaraman of 'Sruti' has provided a free translation of the bulk of these observations. The thrust of the sage's sagacious comments is that music offers one of the paths to God-

realisation and that music should refine a human being, not lead him to the lowest depths of life.

The Paramacharya would often ask musicians calling on him to receive his blessings, to sing or perform. Sometimes he would ask that a particular kriti be repeated and would even join in. He would offer comments on the composition, explain an aspect or two, or suggest corrections.

In his conversations, the Paramacharya has often disclosed indirectly that his interest goes beyond philosophical explanations and observations and that he has a keen interest and understanding of the grammar and aesthetics of Carnatic music. The instances in this special feature refer to incidents that illustrate this facet of his amazing personality. Says Lalgudi G. Jayaraman, the violin maestro who has been drawn to the presence of the Paramacharya for many years: "The Acharya's knowledge of Carnatic music, his familiarity with the vast range of compositions of various vaggayakara-s, his insight into the subtleties of various kriti-s and the significance of each kriti, are all truly amazing".

Some of these instances are given below :

- When Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, feeling blessed to have the opportunity to sing for the

Paramacharya, completed rendering the kriti 'Mahalakshmi' composed by Muthuswami Dikshitar in Madhava Manohari, the latter asked Semmangudi to sing it again. As the vidwan was nearing the end of the composition this time, the Paramacharya joined him in singing and then went on to explain the meaning of the lyrics to those assembled.

- After rendering Syama Sastry's 'Devibrova Samayamidey' in the Raga Chintamani, a well-known musician chose to inform the Acharya that the song was a rare one and that the raga was perhaps a creation of Sastry himself. Further trying to impress his distinguished listener, he added that Syama Sastry was in great mental agony while composing the piece. The Acharya responded to all this asking, in low key, whether the musician could render one of the stanzas of the charanam of the song which he had omitted. The musician was dumbfounded that the Acharya was quite familiar with even rare songs.
- A veena vidwan came to pay his respects to the Acharya who was then camping in a remote village. The Acharya expressed a wish to listen to the music of the visitor. Since the vidwan had not brought his instrument with him, a veena was procured from a local resident. Unfortunately, due to prolonged disuse, the instrument was not in good condition, the fret of the panchama note having been

dislocated. When the visitor expressed his inability to perform on that veena, it seemed quite reasonable. Therefore, the astonishment of the people congregated there was all the greater when the Acharya said: "So what? Play a raga like Abhogi or Hindolam or Sreeranjani". The musically knowledgeable among those assembled quickly realized that the Acharya was asking the vidwan to play a panchama-varjya raga - a raga whose scales omitted the Pa.

- Srirangam Sundaram Iyer was a great devotee of Tyagaraja. It was he who had taken the initiative to install marble slabs, with Tyagaraja's Kriti-s inscribed on them, around the saint's samadhi in Tiruvaiyaru. He was a devotee of the Paramacharya also. When on one occasion, he had come to have darshan of His Holiness, he requested the latter to explain the correct meanings of the phrase, 'Yanta Bhanta Nishanta' occurring in Tyagaraja's 'Rama Samayamu Brovara' in Madhyamavati. He said that even learned scholars were unable to comprehend the correct meaning of the phrase and wondered whether the handed-down text might have become corrupted while being transcribed or printed. The Acharya remained in silent contemplation for a while. He then asked Sundaram Iyer to repeat the passage again and also enquired in whose praise the kriti had been composed. When Sundaram



The Kanchi Paramacharya totally engrossed in music, listening to the Sangitaanjali with veena, venu and violin, presented by Vidwans Pichumani, Dr. Ramani and Lalgudi Jayaraman.

Photo Courtesy : Yet Another Garland by N. Rajagopalan

Iyer responded by saying that the kriti was on Sree Rama, the Acharya gave the following explanation;

What does 'Kamakoti' mean? For instance, there is the well-known Sanskrit expression 'Dharma Artha Kama Moksha', indicating four progressive stages in spiritual evolution. Now, the term 'Koti' means the farthest boundary line. What follows automatically is the next stage or part. By the same logic, in the Sanskrit alphabet the letter next to 'Ya' is 'Ra'. Ya+Anta (end) automatically means the next letter 'Ra'. Likewise, Bha+Anta (end) means 'Ma'. These two letters read together, bring out 'Ra', 'Ma', i.e., 'Rama'! Proceeding further, 'nishi' in Sanskrit means darkness. 'Nishantha' is another word for moon, i.e., Chandra. Thus the

entire phrase 'Yanta Bhanta Nishanta' is to be read as 'Ramachandra'. It speaks volumes of Tyagaraja's genius that he could employ the language in such a fine and novel way to denote Ramachandra.

These incidents describe, as well, the range of the Paramacharya's knowledge of music and musical compositions.

The Paramacharya's fondness for good music added a fillip to the desire of a host of musicians - including prominent musicians like Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Iyengar, Madurai Pushavanam, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and M.S. Subbulakshmi to seek his darshan and make a reverential offering of their music at his feet.

Violin maestro Lalgudi G.

Jayaraman is among the musicians drawn to the Sage of Kanchi and he has recollected some of his experiences in the article captioned **The Paramacharya and I.**

B. M. Sundaram of Pondicherry is a musicologist, not a performing artist. But he too had opportunities to observe the Paramacharya's deep interest in music and musicians. He has recollected his observations in **My Encounters With His Holiness.**

Several songs have been composed in praise of the Paramacharya. A note on the subject by Narayanan Pillai rounds off the special feature.

And the Paramacharya himself has composed a song. This is the benediction for universal peace, *Maitrim Bhajata*, which he wrote for the U.N. Day concert of M. S. Subbulakshmi at the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations in New York, on 23rd October 1966. The song rang out with wonderful messages: on war, and peace and ended with the benediction, "The Lord who created this earth and the other planets is most merciful. May His blessings rain on all the people of this Universe".

Paramacharya's Observations On Music

The following are selections from observations made on music by the Paramacharya.

(A free translation of the text in Tamil, as given in *Deivattin Kural*, Part III, published by Vanathi Padippakam,

Madras - 17, by P.C. Jayaraman)

Sangeeta does not mean only music but includes music, dance and drama. From ancient times all three have been practiced - *Geeta Vidya*, *Nritya* and *Nataka*. Cinema would also come under *Nataka*. The authoritative *Natya Sastra* deals with both music and dance. Bharata is often referred to as the one who first gave a full description of music which is now equated with Sangeeta. Tyagaraja is also said to have referred to him and offered obeisance to him in a composition. Also, dance is called *Bharatanatyam*. The rules governing the art of dance are cited from Bharata Sastra. Some time back some people questioned the propriety of dancers being honoured by the Sangeet Natak Akademi and whether the organization should not be renamed as Sangeet Natya Natak Akademi. But the Akademi pointed out that, according to the ancient definition, the word Sangeetam included vocal music, instrumental music and dance.

Similarly, *Nataka* (drama) cannot be separated from *Natya* (dance); both the words come from the root '*nat*', which refers to movement. The Tamil word '*koothu*' refers to both to drama and dance. The Sanskrit words '*natan*' and '*nati*' mean both dancers and actors and actresses. In dance, the *nava rasas* are shown to the accompaniment of music, without the aid of costumes and sets. In drama, the same *nava rasas* are expressed with dialogue: this is closer to reality and uses costumes and stage

settings. It is the special feature of dance that, in it, the audience has to provide these for itself mentally. There are different types of movement in *nataka* like limb movement, emotional movement and the step by step movement of the story. What is sung is music and the spoken word is prose. However good the prose may be, it satisfies a *rasika* only when it is complemented by artistic appeal. This is why songs and dance occur in the course of drama. In dance, there is song but no speech. But music, by itself has a completeness even though there is no dance or speech in it. An *alapana* gives satisfaction even though there is no dance or speech in it. An *alapana* gives satisfaction even though there are no words or *rasabhava* in it.

Gandharva Veda, which comprises singing, dance and drama, does not bring us wealth or satisfy our hunger. It gives these returns only to the performers. The audience pays for it. But even if the audience thus loses money, it benefits in gaining some mental pleasure, enthusiasm and a means of passing time. Thus, there is a utility value in it.

Why is it called *Gandharva Veda*? Because it is the Gandharvas who pass their time wholly in doing exciting things, singing and dancing.

The pleasures of the senses have the power of drawing man. Music, dance, cinema, sports, etc., should really be like a pickle in a meal, to make the meal appealing. They should have the last

priority for the expenditure of our time, money and attention.

If we do not temper our enjoyment of these arts with moderation, they will themselves drag us down. Dance, music and writing all descend to low levels in the name of popular appeal. The love of sports can make a man mad. And if a film star makes his appearance, people behave as if they are having darshan of God.

Musicians put the blame on the audience, saying this is what they want and sing any kind of songs. And people in turn put the blame on performers and say that they have to take only what is offered. In this, more than the common people, the performers have a greater responsibility.

It is usual to make a distinction between *nritya* and *natya*, saying that *nritya* is not display of feelings through *abhinaya* but the exhibition of *jatis* with the feet according to the *tala* and *sollukattu* and a variety of hand movements; whereas *natya* is the projection, through *abhinaya*, of the meaning of a song.

How does *nritya* please merely through bodily movements, without the display of *rasabhava*? The answer lies in the aesthetic sense of man. The mere perception of beauty brings an inner happiness. Something within him enables him to differentiate between what is beauty and what is not and to be entranced by beauty. When a dog runs, we do not find beauty in it. But if an elephant is walking, moving its body,

trunk and ears in coordination, we can go on looking at it. A crow hopping about is not beautiful. But we are greatly pleased by the sight of a swan moving gracefully. Mere movement has such power. This is why the *jatis* of *suddha nritta*, with feet stamping, hands moving and the waist bending, bring us pleasure through their indefinable beauty.

This happiness has a purity. But if a buffoon flings about his limbs, it is just humorous. Sometimes even such movement can have a sensual appeal. Thus body movements can evoke different types of feelings. In *Kathakali*, the players do not speak. They only dance. But they convey many different emotions through the movements of hands, feet, eyebrows and lips.

Kathai Kali is what we call *Kathakali*. *Kali*, in Tamil, means happiness (*ananda*). Happiness makes one feel like dancing. The telling of a story through dance came to be called *Kathakali*.

Tala gati is called *Laya*. Why? It has the capacity to hold us in thrall. When a mridanga is played as it should be played, it appeals to us and holds our attention. *Sruti* and *raga* have this quality.

Even though dance, music and the *navarasas* please our senses - eyes, ears and mind - they derive their greatness only because they are based on *Sama Veda*. The Lord himself has said that, among the Vedas, he is the *Sama Veda*. The connection between *Gandharva Veda* and *Sama Veda* is

closer than that between other *Upa-Vedas* and their parent Vedas. Anyone who has heard *Sama gana* would know that the seven swaras must have developed from the swaras of *Sama gana*. Even the name *Sama gana* itself shows that it is related to music.

If the nine *rasas* are identified with God and Dharma, and if we dramatise Ramayana, Mahabharata and the stories of great people, they can penetrate our hearts and exert their influence. It is our fault that we misuse the art of drama on "social themes" - this, that and the other. Gandhi spoke about the deep impression made on him by the play *Shravana Pitrubhakti* which he saw when he was young. Can reading any number of essays or listening to teachings exert the same impression as watching living persons acting out a thing?

In olden days, the rulers considered it a great public good, for the spiritual upliftment of people, to propagate the art and culture of the country; they supported these with all facilities and subventions. The song that is heard has a greater impact than speech and writing. Visual art has even more impact. Drama (which includes speech and song) and dance (which includes song alone) have such a unique power.

The Gandharva arts have the power of creating a lasting impression of both good and bad. It is upto us to be sensible and use them only for gaining something good.

Appar, Sundarar and Sambandar,

who were the authors of *Tevarams*, set them in ragas called '*panns*' and dedicated them to God. They have described God as having the form of music itself. The preservation of the Vedas through years and years without change in the swaras, is the result of a great tradition.

In Tamil country, there is another great tradition - that of the Odhuvars or hymnodists - bringing honour to it for about 1400 years. In doing pooja, it is prescribed that, after the ceremonial bath, songs in the language of the region should be sung. Accordingly, the Chola kings made grants for the singing of *Tevarams* in temples and thus contributed to the growth of the musical tradition. The Odhuvars have been guarding, in their original form, the *Tevaram panns*.

The *Divya Prabandha* verses also used to be rendered in *panns*. But later, as we see now, it became the practice to recite them in *prasa* without any raga, according to researchers.

Lord Shiva is considered to be the originator of music. In his song *Nadatanumanisam*, Tyagaraja says that Shiva's body itself is '*Nada*'. '*Tanu*' means body. The charanam of the song says that the seven swaras came from the five faces. I wondered how seven swaras came from five faces, and consulted (Mysore) Vasudevachar, (Karaikudi) Sambasiva Iyer, Maharajapuram and Semmangudi. They too could not understand it at first. After referring to works on *Sangeeta Sastra*, I

could find statements indicating that the Shadja and Panchama were *prakriti* swaras and *swayambhu* like God himself; only the other five, which were *vikriti* swaras or artificial swaras, appeared from the five faces of Ishwara.

The *prakriti* swaras **Sa** and **Pa** have only one tone each, whereas the *vikriti* swaras **Ri**, **Ga**, **Ma**, **Dha** and **Ni** have two varieties each.

The swaras **Sa**, **Ri**, **Ga**, **Ma**, **Pa**, **Dha** and **Ni** are so indicated on the basis of their names: Shadja, Rishabha, Gandhara, Madhyama, Panchama, Dhaivata and Nishada. They are representations of the natural sounds made by seven animals. **Sa** is the Peacock's sound. **Ri** is the sound made by a Rishabha (Bull). **Ga** is the sound of a Goat. **Ma** is the call of the Krauncha bird. **Pa** is the cuckoo's call. **Dha** is the neighing of a horse and **Ni** is the trumpeting of an elephant.

The *siksha sastras* specify how the *Veda aksharas* should be sounded by the breath coming in contact with specified body parts. Similarly, *sangeeta sastras* prescribe how the different swaras should be produced by the movement of the breath, from the lower abdomen to the top of the head. In his *krithi*, **Sobhillu**, Tyagaraja says that the *devatas* of the swaras reside in the seven specific parts of the body.

Nadopasana is a great *sadhana* of *mantra sastra* and *yoga sastra*. True *nadopasana* is *Omkara upasana*; therefore, it is also a *Vedanta upasana*. *Nada*, *Bindu* and *Kala* are three great

truths. *Nada* is the representation of Shiva and *Bindu* of Shakti. *Nada* is the root of sound. *Bindu* is the root of light. Ultimately, shapes too are formed only from sounds. There is a distinction between *Nada* and sound. Sound is what comes out and it is of different kinds. Whatever be the kind of sound, its basis is in *Nada*.

Sangeeta sastras explain how to make different instruments. This shows that the authors of these works were well versed in the technicalities of the production of sound of different kinds. The length and thickness of the strings of a veena, the distance between its frets, the size of the holes of a nagaswara or flute, the distance between the holes, etc., all have to be scientifically correct. Otherwise they cannot produce the swaras. Percussion instruments cannot show the difference between the swaras; nor can they produce the different sounds of the alphabet. But they produce certain sounds of musical value which can bring out *laya vinyasa*. The two sides of a mridanga produce different sounds. There are regulations on what hide should be used, what chemical should be used, etc., as also pertaining to the length of the mridanga and of its different parts. Similarly for other instruments. The nagaswara used nowadays is more than two feet long. It is called Bari nagaswara. Another kind, within a cubit in length, is called Timiri nagaswara. It has a higher pitch. There is another kind which is in between the two, called Idaibari. The

sangeeta sastras also explain technical points like what wood should be used for particular instruments, what hide, what string, etc., in order to produce their characteristic sounds. In instruments like the veena and tambura, the belly and the long part should be made from wood, from the same tree. Then the wood in the two parts being of the same age, will produce a proper uniform sound. Such intricate details have all been specified in the *sastras*. Ancient Tamil works contain no end of information about the yazh. The *Yazhmuri Padigam* of Gnanasambandar reveals the depth of his knowledge of music. And Adi Shankara's depth of knowledge can be known from the Sloka beginning '*Galerekhastisro*' which occurs in the *Soundaryalahari*.

It is with full knowledge of the nature of sounds and how they are produced that the authors of *sangeeta sastras* laid down the methods of making different instruments.

When we speak, even without knowing the technicalities involved, we make the necessary movements in our throat, mouth, etc. But when *mantras* are being recited, there should be absolute *akshara suddha* or perfection of syllables. Because, even though they appear to be *khanda*, these *mantras* were heard by Rishis in the sounds of the *akhanda akasa* (boundless space) and passed on to us by them. Only if they are pronounced perfectly can we reap the benefits of their unlimited power. To ensure that this is done and

to explain its technique scientifically, the *siksha sastra* was produced as one of the parts of the Vedas.

There are four types of musical instruments: *tantri vadya*, *randhara vadya*, *charma vadya*, and *loha vadya*. '*Tantri*' means string. Veena, tambura, yazh, sitar, sarangi, and the violin which is a Western instrument - are all string instruments. '*Randhara*' means a hole and includes instruments: the flute, nagaswara, shehnai, clarinet, etc. Other instruments have to be plucked by the fingers, bowed, struck, etc., to produce musical sounds. *Randhara* instruments (wind instruments) have to be blown by the mouth to produce music. The harmonium is the only exception, in that it is played by the hands and substitutes the bellows for the mouth. In the flute and nagaswara, the holes are closed and opened. In the harmonium, the keys are pressed and released. The principle is the same. *Charma vadyas* produce sound when a piece of stretched leather is struck. The mridanga, tavil, nagra, berigai, kanjeera, etc., are *charma vadyas*. In *loha vadyas* what is important is the *loha* (metal) used for making it. Morsing, jalra, bell, etc., belong to this variety. The instrument is made of one metal only. They have neither strings nor holes. The ghata is made of mud; it is only a pot. The jalatarangam is a set of cups made of china clay. Water is poured into these cups, which are then struck on the rims with two thin bamboo sticks, producing the seven swaras.

As in instruments, there are many varieties of dance also: chiefly, *tandava* and *lasya*. Male majesty fills *tandava*. Women do *lasya*, a graceful dance. Parameswara's dance is *tandava*, *Oozhi tandava*, and so on.

Great men concerned with the arts have produced many *sastras* on the *Gandharva vidya*. Some of them have also composed many songs. Rishi Bharata is important in this, but there have been others as well: Narada, Agastya, Matanga, Anjaneya and Nandikeswara are referred to as devotees of music as well as exponents of *sastra*. Todi raga is in fact called Hanumatodi (there are several names of ragas related to God, like Kalyani, Sankarabharanam, Bhairavi, Shanmukhapriya). From old palm-leaf manuscripts we learn about the contributions made to music by Sarangadeva, Somadeva, Ramamatya, Govinda Dikshitar (who was a minister and greatly learned in *Advaita sastra*) and his son Venkatamakhi in terms of grammar and textual descriptions. Kings like Mahendravarma and Raghunatha Nayak have also similarly contributed to music. Rock inscriptions on *sangeeta sastra* have been found in Kudumiyamalai (near Pudukottai in Tamil Nadu). The present day veena is called Raghunatha Veena after the Nayak king. There were thus several people who had deep knowledge and experience in music.

It is believed that, in olden days, there was the same system of music

throughout the country. After the impact of foreign influence in all fields in the north in the days of Mughal rule, two distinctive systems developed: Hindustani music in the north and Carnatic music in the south.

Of the *vaggeyakaras*, Jayadeva who wrote *Gita Govinda* about 800 years ago, may be considered the first. The next one, among the notable composers, was Purandaradasa. There is a school of thought that the name Carnatic music itself owes itself to Purandaradasa. Jayadeva and Purandaradasa sang the praise of Lord Krishna. Narayana Teertha too, who wrote the *Krishna Leela Tarangini*, did so. Oothukadu Venkatasubba Iyer's *Krishnaganam* in Tamil is now becoming well-known. Bhadrachala Ramadasa's compositions were all on Rama. Of the musical Trinity, who are so important to our music, Tyagaraja sang largely about Rama, but he also composed some kritis on Siva, Amba and other divinities. Muthuswami Dikshitar sang the praise of all the deities, from Ayyanar to Mariamman. Syama Sastry's songs were all on Amba, Kamakshi. Gopalakrishna Bharati, Muthu Tandavar, Marimutha Pillai and others sang about Siva only, that too chiefly about Nataraja. Arunachala Kavi wrote *Rama Natakam*. Mayavaram Vedanayakam Pillai, a Christian, composed Vedantic songs on a single, common God, applicable to all religions. And in our times, there is no lack of composers who have the learning and *bhakti*.

From those days till now, the tradition has developed that composers, whoever they are, would sing only about God and not on secular themes [except in popular music].

Folk songs are a separate group by themselves. Similarly, for the rural folk, there are many kinds of *koothu* (folk play) and dance. *Karagam*, *kavadi*, whatever it is, somehow it gets a religious connection. There are different kinds of folk songs like *temmangu*, *kavadi chindu* and *nondi chindu*. People engaged in ploughing, drawing water from a well, rowing a boat, pulling loads, churning milk and pounding paddy sing while working. Music acts as an anodyne, reducing the difficulty of toil and making it something enjoyable. Also, more work gets done when a number of people do it, singing at the same time. In such songs, there is sure to be at least a little reference to God.

Just as music is able to infuse enthusiasm and reduce the burden of hard, physical labour, music can also stir our feelings, help us to experience them and enjoy the peace that follows. Lullabies are classic examples of the power of music to bring peace. However mischievous a child may be, as soon as he is put in a cradle or hammock or on one's lap and lullaby is sung, he goes to sleep. Even a snake is charmed by music. Starting with the lullaby and ending with the *pilakkanam* (sung when there has been a death), there are many types of songs. It was the custom in olden days for a mother to guide her child

properly by telling *puranic* tales through songs. But the modern practice is for the mother to go to her place of employment before her child wakes up.

There are specific songs for auspicious occasions, like there has to be *nagaswara* music for weddings or any *mangala karya*. In fact, the *nagaswara* is called the *mangala vadya*. For war too, there is specific music. The national song is held in great respect. During the freedom struggle, in order to arouse national feeling in people, songs of 'national' poets were used for propaganda. All emotions - happiness, sorrow, bravery - can be expressed through songs.

But, ultimately music is for the purpose of *Shanta* [peace]. Tyagaraja's song *Shantamu leka soukhyamu ledu* shows that peace is the final objective of music. Only the recitation of the Lord's name can bring lasting peace; hence our timeless tradition that music is centred on God.

We should never lose sight of this objective. Our music and dance are now becoming known abroad and they are being taught in foreign universities. Our music is featured in concerts, in

important international institutions and is being honoured. This is a matter for some consolation. Why? Having largely lost our ancient glory and having been reduced to the need to extend the begging bowl to several countries, we still see fit to give advice to others, beyond our station. This leads them to think poorly of us and consider us ungrateful. When we see our musicians and dancers being honoured abroad and see that they think that our arts are priceless, we can feel some satisfaction that we are not merely beggars but have something to give as well.

Let art, for art's sake, spread and be spread. That is of course, all for the good. But we should not let people forget what has been the objective for these arts from ancient times, that they are the means to lead us to the Lord. We should remember the ideals of great souls like Tyagaraja who eschewed *nidhi* (wealth) and wanted only God's *sannidhi* and refused to sing in the king's court even when invited by kings like Sarfoji.

Gandharva Veda should be cherished for gaining peace for oneself and to bring peace to others. □

Nada Yoga (Music itself as the Supreme God)

A few krithis composed by Sri Tyagaraja Swami on Nada Yoga are given below :-
Mokshamu Galada (Saramati) ; Naadopaasanache (Begada) ; Naada Loludai (Kalyanavasantham) ; Vidulaku Mrokkeda (Mayamalavagoula) ; Aananda Saagara (Garudadhwani) ; Sitavara Sangita Jnanamu (Devagandhari) ; Sangita Sastra Jnanamu (Mukhari) ; Swara Raaga Sudhaa (Shankarabharanam) ; Raga Sudhaarasa (Andholika) ; Vara Raaga Laya (Cenchukaambhoji) ; Sripapriya Sangitopasana (Athana) ; Sobhillu Saptaswara (Jaganmohini).

SATARA KARANAS - A MILESTONE IN 20TH CENTURY

by Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam

The Hindu concept of transcending time has been experienced by those chosen few of the 20th century who were made to perceive this phenomenon in the fragile human frame of the Sage of that century, Pujyasri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swamikal, the 68th Sankaracharya of the illustrious Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. One wonders with awe at his 'Sarvagatva' character, with unbelievable total knowledge from the most profound to the most mundane. In his 100 years of perceivable human form, many individuals were turned into trail blazers in a variety of vocations, as a result of his Godly guidance, lighting their respective paths, perhaps by kindling their own pre-ordained intuitive fire.

I am one of those privileged to have a profound sense of fulfillment of the purpose of this God-given life. I have enjoyed His benign blessings as a tiny tool, gaining some historic significance, just because of having been in his holy hands. From my babyhood, my parents had taken me for His darshan - thanks to my family's affinity to the Kanchi Matham. I cannot precisely remember when I came under His divine shade. Even as a child of five or six, I remember His calling me into his room and magnanimously talking to me. At seven, I started learning dance. I was in my late teens, when He visited Sri Anantha Padmanabhaswami temple in Gandhinagar, Adyar; there He turned

towards me; I was quite far away from Him in the crowd of his devotees; He nodded his head to summon me. I turned back, thinking that He was calling someone else. He smiled and pointed His finger at me and called me again. With hesitation due to my own doubt at the possibility of this happening, I shivered, as some devotees pushed me forward. The Acharya removed a big rose garland which was adorning His head like a crown and threw it into my hands with his characteristic compassionate smile and walked away. As I stood dazed, the devotees around me left only the string and a few petals for me. I had no hesitation in sharing this treasure. Again, when I was in college, another such strange happening at Kancheepuram stunned my family. He peeled off a banana and an orange from the *prasadam* tray which was brought to Him, perhaps from Kamakshi temple. He graciously beckoned to me and asked me to take the tray with the fruits, He had himself peeled.

Later, when my Guru in research, Dr.T.N. Ramachandran, died, the one and only Mahaswami gave me crucial clues for my research. Before I submitted my thesis for the Ph.D., degree, I took those 1000 (pages before binding them), to Hampi where He was camping in the midst of the ruined heritage of the Vijayanagara empire. My ambition was just to take it within a radius of ten kilometres of His presence,

so that the radiation of His blessings will sanctify my work. But in that tranquillity of His solitude, I could take the bundle close to him. Looking at it, he exclaimed with a single word, "Doctorate!". In my excitement, I heard it as 'torch-light' and I quickly placed a new torch-light nearer Him, still holding my thesis. He smiled and asserted - "I asked if this is for your Doctorate." My blood ran cold in fear. In that deserted mantapa, I saw Him sitting next to an idol, which I presumed was that of Adi Sankara. In that shrine, I placed my thesis at His holy feet. His remark even before He turned the pages was revealing. He said, "You had to bring this work to me to Hampi, right at this shrine of Sri Vidyaranya, for it was He who started the task of re-establishing all the lost facets of Hindu culture, when He founded the Vijayanagara empire" Even then I did not realise the full significance. In the following ninety minutes, my viva-voce seemed to have been over. Later, my humble thesis remained inside His palanquin for a few weeks.

In 1979, when the Mahaswami was camping at Satara in Maharashtra, I was made to stay there for about four days; it was to get His approval for my paper prepared for the World Tamil Conference. The way He guided me and prepared me to counter opposite views with confidence, conviction and courage to speak the truth, are all golden moments in the process of moulding me. Those details are beyond the purview of this article. Anyway, I am conscious of how Satara has blossomed as an important centre in the history of Asian dance art. Only time will reveal its full significance; for the Mahaswami is

beyond time. It was at Satara that the (Late) Shri Shamanna - a prominent hotelier of the region - had the Mahaswami's unique blessings and guidance to build a temple for Lord Nataraja. Since the whole of Bharat has only one temple for Nataraja at Chidambaram in Tamil Nadu, this temple was named as Uttara Chidambaram Nataraja Mandir. It was just when the foundation work had started that I went straight from Delhi to Satara to place my Presidential Award of "Padmasri" at His lotus feet. He graciously asked my brother Balakrishnan, his wife Shyamala, their son Kannan and myself to go to the site of the Mandir and see the work being done there. After seeing it, we returned to Him and in that excitement, I asked Him "Will this Chidambaram temple also have the *Karana* sculptures?" He smiled and said that I must collect all the relevant information about the *desachara* (regional codes) of Maharashtra in performing arts and bring that note to him. When I boarded the train at Pune (to Bombay), I noticed an old Gazetteer of the region in the hands of an elderly gentleman, I was amazed at this programming of the *Jagadguru*. In that journey, I completed the work which the Mahaswami had given me. Within a month, I went again to Satara with that note, but He asked me to keep it pending.

Meanwhile, He had deputed one of His experienced senior disciples, Shri P. Kannan to be in the Trust Board and be in-charge of the construction. The architect-cum-sculptor was the renowned Shri Muthiah Sthapati. The devotional contribution of Shri Shamanna and his family was substantial. The State Governments of

* Director, Nrithyodaya, Chennai

Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala also contributed. As the work was progressing, the Acharya left Satara and walked towards Andhra Pradesh. When we went in search of Him to take His blessings for my tour of USA to collect funds for the Hindu Temple Society of North America, we found Him in a cowshed in a small hamlet. It was here that He commanded me to take steps to install a new set of 108 *Karana* sculptures at Satara, based on Bharata's "*Natya Sastra*". He desired that the new sculptures must be made as per "*Marga*" tradition, so that it would be common to the whole Hindu world and not pertain just to any "*Desi*", ie., adhering to a restricted region. I was excited beyond words. On my return from USA, we went to have His darshan at Kurnool. I took some sample photographs of *Karana* sculptures from Thanjavur (Siva with four hands), Kumbakonam (Siva with two hands) and Chidambaram (Parvati with two hands), for Him to make the choice for being copied at Satara; probably the time was still not ripe for His final proclamation. I returned with no answer.

Within a few weeks, the Mahaswami sent Shri P. Kannan to my residence in Chennai with a message of definite command and detailed instructions to me. The following were the points:-

1) Satara temple shall have twin figures of Siva and Parvati depicting all the 108 *Karanas* of *Natya Sastra*.

2) No earlier designs from other temples need to be copied and that they have to be freshly designed by me, based

on my reconstruction of the movements. (He graciously recalled that I have been ordained to discover that the dance sculptures are like still photos of moving dancers, portraying a frozen moment of a movement. Now I was to catch those moments of the movements which have not been recorded in the three temples).

3) They are to be fixed at eye level around the sanctum so as to give the efficacy of 108 *Pradakshinams*, even if the devotees went round once.

4) The couplets defining each *Karana* have to be quoted in Nagari script below the respective *Karana* panels.

For a few minutes, I was dumb-founded. What a tremendous concern for posterity! All this added a new meaning and dimension to my life.

A brief account of the concept of *Karanas* is not out of place here, so that the significance of the *Karana* project can be appreciated better. "*Karana*" is a technical term used in "*Natya Sastra*" for denoting a basic unit of dance. A combination of a specified movement of the legs and hands in dance is called a "*Nrta Karana*". 108 such combinations are described in Sage Bharata's "*Natya Sastra*" which is the earliest extant treatise in the world on theatre arts and poetics. Since Lord Brahma created this by taking elements from the four Vedas, this work is referred to as the fifth Veda. The dramatic concepts were handed to Bharata by Brahma. Lord Siva endowed the art with the dance element to create total theatre. He proclaimed that the performance of the *Karanas* has the same efficacy as that of a *Yagna*, and

ordered Bharata to use them in the prayerful preliminaries of the plays. Such is the spiritual value of the *Karanas*, apart from their cultural and aesthetic aspects.

Karana sculptures in temples of Tamil Nadu

Though there are dance like sculptures and dance sculptures all over India, five temples in Tamil Nadu have a sculptural codification of the *Karanas*. The table below gives some details.

Sr. No	Place	Date (Cent. AD)	Figures	No. of Figures
1)	Brihadeeswara Temple (Thanjavur)	11th	Siva with 4 hands	81
2)	Sarngapani Temple (Kumbakonam)	12th	Siva with 2 hands with names of <i>Karanas</i> inscribed	105
3)	Nataraja Temple (Chidambaram)	13th	Parvati (4 sets) : East and West Gopuras have inscriptions of couplets from <i>Natya Sastra</i>	108
4)	Arunachaleswar Temple (Tiruvannamalai)	15th	Parvati (copied from Chidambaram)	108
5)	Vrddhagireeswarar Temple (Vrddhachalam)	16th	Parvati (4 sets)	102

Satara *Karanas* - The creative process

As I started working, I had a little confusion in my mind with regard to the portrayal of the *Karanas* in which the movement involved lifting the entire leg near the head. There is a popular legend of Goddess Kali being defeated by Lord Siva through his performance of "*Urdva Tandava*", which He did by picking up his fallen ear-ring with His toe. This was said to be due to her inability out of feminine modesty. In my thesis, I have proved that this story must have been conceived only after the 13th century, when the *Karanas*

were being forgotten. Such *Karanas* are seen portrayed in the Gopurams of the Chidambaram temple as being danced by Parvati Herself. If she could dance it as part of "*Lasya*", Kali, a more fierce deity, could have easily done it. Anyway, I wanted a clarification from the Acharya for designing the figures - whether to follow the pre - 13th or post - 13th century belief. He was in Chinna Kancheepuram Matham premises, in the cowshed. The

Mahaswami graciously commanded me to design the sculptures based on "*Marga*" and adhere to pre-13th century concepts.

It took one year for me to design the figures. After making the rough drawings on my own for my memory, I modelled for making the final sketches. These diagrams were prepared by Prof. Tirugnanam in Chola style in accordance with "*Talamana*" (proportions). I have used the twin figures (about 12" height) to bring out the animation of the respective movements. Parvati's figures show the beginning or an earlier part of the movements.

The secondary hands of Siva indicate either the course of action or the end of the Karana. Every line-drawing was taken to Sri Periyaval for his approval. When the Mahaswami was returning to Kancheepuram, he was halting at Ranipet. I went there with my family to place at His holy feet Rs. 10,000/- which I had just received as part of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award. I prayerfully requested Him to accept it as a starting point of collecting a separate fund for the Satara Karana Project. Without any hesitation, He not only accepted it, but also gave a historic benediction by stating: "It is the fruit of her hard work in dance, her research product is going to be perpetuated as valid for thousands of years. The Karana figures which were planned to be done as plaster-cast need to be carved in black granite, as in the case of Tanjavur temple. Even sandstone used in Mahabalipuram has corroded due to salty air. The stone for Satara Karanas must come from Pattimalaikkuppam near Tindivanam".

This meant much more work for Shri P. Kannan, who was incharge of the entire temple project. Shri Muthiah Sthapati took about a decade to complete this difficult project. The Chola style has been followed with less importance for ornamentation, so as to get figure prominence. At the command of the Mahaswami, the manuscript for the entire inscriptions in Nagari script was personally inspected and corrected by no less a person than Sri Bala Periyaval (Pujyasri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswati Swamigal). The polished granite slabs with the inscriptions were the devotional contribution of M/s. Enterprising Enterprises.

The Mahaswami felt that the Government of India must share the cost of the Karana Project; accordingly, the Department of Culture, gave a grant of Rs. 1,00,000/- to the Temple Trust at Satara for this project. Apart from this, in my own humble way, I collected Rs. 1,53,000/- for this project and donated it to the Trust. Shri Muthiah Sthapati took keen interest and we spent hours and days together to make the sculptures as authentic and beautiful as possible.

It was on a Diwali day that all the sculptures were loaded in two lorries and taken to Kancheepuram after due puja at the work spot with ceremonial fire works. The figures and inscriptions were placed before the Mahaswami; Sri Bala Periyaval did "Bilvarchana". My sister-in-law, Shyamala Balakrishnan and I sang the "Sambhu Natanam" of Patanjali Maharishi. Since Sri Jayendra Saraswati Swamigal was then camping in Mumbai, the sculptures were taken there. My nephew Kannan and I went there along with the Sthapati to take his blessings and then proceeded to Satara for the placement of the figures. It was a miracle that though each panel was of different length, the 108 slabs fit into the space precisely, as foreseen by the Mahaswami. After the entire work of fixing the sculptures was over, Shri Muthiah Sthapati went to Kancheepuram and reported to the Mahaswami about the completion of the Karana Project. This happened to be just two days prior to the Acharya attaining Siddhi. Later, in February 1997, their Holinesses Sri Jayendra Saraswati Swamigal and Sri. Sankara Vijayendra Saraswati Swamigal duly performed

"Samprokshanam", for the 108 Karana panels at Satara and also most graciously blessed me with a title, "Bharata Sastra Raksha Mani".

The Mahaswami's interest in this project was so phenomenal that, even after He left his mortal frame, I have been able to realise some totally new dimensions. Even when I began taking the line drawings for his approval, He made a passing statement that I must visit Indonesia. I realised the significance of that comment, only after the Karanas were installed at Satara, ie., about 13 years later. I discovered a set of Karana sculptures at Prambanan Siva Temple in Central Java, Indonesia, belonging to the 9th century AD. It is a miracle in my life that my reconstruction of the Karanas and the Satara version have a tremendous link and similarity with those sculptures of Java. This "link beyond time and space" has been the subject of a detailed study for the post-doctoral research of an Italian archaeologist, Dr. (Ms) Alessandra Iyer. Her book which is published in Thailand contains the diagrams of Satara Karanas and the corresponding Karana figures of

Prambanan. This has proved beyond doubt the authentic validity of my work. How could it be otherwise, when I am but an instrument in the holy hands of our Pujyasri Mahaswami.

This "Marga" link that binds the entire Hindu world is obviously what I had been ordained to work on. The Satara temple will stand as a monument linking the past and the future of the world of Hindu aesthetic philosophy. This temple, like the Chidambaram temple of Tamil Nadu, is housing the two contradictory concepts of the Lord Infinite, worshipped as the formless Brahman and His physical manifestation as a Cosmic Dancer in 108 forms. Perhaps nowhere else can our Universal Parents be visualized in the 108 different dancing attitudes, as though representing the synthesis of matter and energy. I strongly believe that in this Janma of mine, I was given one more chance to re-establish Hindu concepts of aesthetics, as I perhaps did in my previous Janmas under the behest of the same Saintly Soul who should have guided me in the past. □

Courtesy : "Dilip", January / March 2000

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BHARATA NATYAM AND ALLIED DANCES OF SOUTH INDIA

by T.S. Parthasarathy

"Bharata Natyam, the most popular classical Indian dance form, has received universal approbation as one of the subtlest expressions of Indian Culture. Its intimate connection with the temple, as a ritualistic art, mirroring the imperceptible feelings of a devotee reflects the inwardness of Hindu culture" says a delightfully vague blurb in a prestigious publication on Bharata Natyam, the price of which is beyond the reach of the common man. In the same publication a Punjabi writer, in his introduction claims that "it has survived for nearly 3000 years in our country, almost intact etc."

As a counterblast to this, Dr. P.S.R. Appa Rao, in his excellent monograph on Bharata's Natya Sastra, Says "it is obvious that Natya is exclusively drama and not dance. However, a confusion has been created in the minds of the public by the word Bharata Natyam to mean one of the classical dance forms from Tanjore. It is neither Natya nor its form has been originated by sage Bharata but only a form of dance, which is 160 years old. Hence, Natya Sastra should not be confused as the science of dance"

I leave it to the discerning student of Bharat Natyam to decide which of these diametrically opposite views are acceptable.

The Name

It is common knowledge that what we now call 'Bharata Natyam' was called; say 60 years ago, as Sadir, Chinna Melam, and other names. The terms Bharatam, Natyam, Aadal, Kuttu, Natanam, etc. were also being used in Tamil Nadu in a loose manner.

The word 'Sadir' was the term which was most commonly used. This is not a Tamil word; and in North Indian languages like Hindi, Urdu, Marathi and Bengali it means the 'highest court of law'. B.R. Rajam Iyer, in his Tamil novel 'Kamalambal Charitram' calls a dance performance of his time (end of the 19th century) as 'Sadir' Subrahmanya Bharati, in his article on 'Abhinaya' calls dance as 'Natyam' and 'Kuttu' and a dancer as a 'Kuttan'. He also uses the term 'Bharata Natyam'

In Telugu, however, the word 'Chaduru' means a 'sabha' and a 'dance performance arranged during occasions like weddings'. It is perhaps this word used during the Nayak period that has come down to us as 'Sadir' Kshetrajna uses the word 'Chaduru' in his padam 'Vedukato' to mean a sabha or a court of Tirumala Nayak of Madurai.

It is not as if the name 'Bharata Natyam' has not been used before this century. Purandara Dasa (1484-1564) in his song 'Adidanu' (Arabhi - Adi) says that

Rambha and Urvashi, the celestial dancers, danced the 'Bharata Natyas' (Rambheyurvasi Ramaniyarellaru Chandade Bharata Natyagala Natise). The plural should be noted and Purandara Dasa did not certainly mean the 'Sadir' of Tanjore. Ghanam Krishnayyar (19th century) uses the term in one of his Padams.

Strangely enough, an unknown commentator on the 'Bharata Senapatiyam', a Tamil work on dance (not the work of the Sangam period) says that 'the four Abhinayas, Aangikam, Vaachikam, Aahaaryam and Saattvikam constitute Bharata Natyam'. This work was published by the Dr. Swaminatha Iyer Library in 1944 but the author's date is not known.

Different interpretations are given for the term 'Bharata Natyam' which is claimed to be the oldest form of codified dance in the world. According to some, it means 'the dance of India' (Bharat) but it is defined as 'Natya in the style laid down by Bharata Muni' but several other classical dance forms of India follows the Natya Sastra in some way or the other. In fact, there is no Indian classical dance which can claim complete freedom from the Natya Sastra.

Others look askance at this definition and assert that it refers only to the dances of the courtesans of Thanjavur and had its origin in the temples and princely courts of South India. It is performed solo and consists of Nritya (pure dance) as well as Nritya (expressional dance) and its technique is largely based on the Natya

Sastra and Abhinaya Darpana.

Natya connotes any one or all of the three allied performances pure dance, interpretative dance and dramatic representation. The dancer acts through gestures, facial expressions and rhythmic movements. Dance speaks to us in a language parallel to that of music or poetry. Classical dance keeps time while a song is sung describing a mood or a story. Concurrently, the meaning of the song appeals to the intellect, the music catches the ear and the eyes feast upon the Abhinaya.

The Natya Sastra and Sadir

It would be wrong to assume that because Sadir is now called Bharata Natyam, the Natya Sastra of Bharata deals only with this kind of solo dance. Bharata's classic is not merely a treatise on dance but a compendium which deals comprehensively with dramaturgy including poetics and everything connected with the stage like its construction, make-up of artistes, acting, music, etc. In the sloka 'Muninaa Bharatena' in his play 'Vikramorvasiya', Kalidas refers to sage Bharata not merely as an authority on the theory of Sanskrit drama, but as a producer of a particular play in which was incorporated the delineation of the eight rasas. Bharata's work remains the earliest and richest source of information on dance and matters pertaining to it. It became the standard work on dance and was followed by all subsequent writers on the subject.

The Sadir's claim to be called Bharata Natyam is not totally illegitimate because it follows, if danced in the traditional way, many of the dance patterns described in the Natya Sastra. An immense variety of exquisite rhythmic patterns called Nritta on the one hand and highly refined and suggestively symbolic Abhinaya on the other, distinguish Bharata Natyam from the other styles of dancing in the world. Every dance unit called Karana in Sanskrit or Adavu in Tamil is made up of a specific pose, a foot-movement and a Nritta Hasta. A continuation of such units makes an Angahara (dance sequence) and a number of Angaharas constitute a full dance. The Nritta or pure dance is 'simply being beautiful to look at'. Though in other dance systems also some poses and hand movements are combined, in Bharata Natya it is combined to such a perfection so as to produce an immense variety of dance pattern with beauty, hands synchronizing with poses and footwork. This is further embellished by the addition of graceful neck and eye movements.

Present day writers on dance try to make a distinction between Adavu and Adaivu. The Tamil dictionary makes no difference between the two words. The word 'Adavu' is used only in dance. The origin of the word seems to be the Telugu word 'Adugu' or 'Aduvu' meaning 'feet'. In the dance section of Tulaja's 'Sangita Saramrita' a number of Adavus have been described and the Sanskrit equivalent has been given as 'Kuttanam' which means the striking of the ground

with the foot. A sloka from the 'Sangita Muktaavali' makes this more clear.

"Etaani karanaan yaahur 'adu' sabdena laukikah

Nata Andhraadi desasthah tauryatrika vichakshanah"

"These are called 'Karanas' or 'Adu' by the people and also by the dancers of Andhra and other areas, who are experts in song, dance or instrumental music.

Dance in ancient Tamil Nadu

A brief reference will be made here to dance in ancient Tamil Nadu which was being indulged in by all classes of people as described in the 'Tolkappiyam', the oldest Tamil work. The kinds of dancing, Vallikkuttu and Kazhanilaikuttu are described, but as we do not know their grammar we are unable to compare them with the present day dance patterns.

The Silappadhikaram is, however, a treasure house so far as dance in Tamil Nadu is concerned. Ilanko Adigal refers to the dances of Siva, Murugan, Kama, Lakshmi and Indrani. Siva is said to have danced the Kodukotti and Paandarangam after his burning of the three cities (Tripuradaaha). This is exactly the same dance referred to by Bharata in his Natya Sastra as having been performed by Siva on the same occasion.

Plethora of Literature

There is no dearth of literature on the

Natya Sastra and subsequent literature on dance like the 'Nrittaratnavali' of Jayasenapati, but these are of use only to the scholar. When a practical dancer tries to find out which dance forms existed in the Chola period, he is referred to some inscriptions or Karana sculptures in some temples. There is hardly any reliable literature on the Sadir as it is danced today under the name of Bharata Natyam. After the decline of the Chola empire, Tamil Nadu was invaded by Malik Kafur in 1310 and there was political chaos till 1370. After the areas were retrieved by the Vijayanagar forces, the Tamil portion was being ruled by the Vijayanagar Kings till the setting up of the of Nayak rule in Tanjore in 1530. No account of what happened in the dance field during these nearly two centuries is available. Some details are available only from the reign of Raghunatha Nayak (1614-1635) and Vijayaraghava Nayak (1635-1673) from the Telugu literature written at that time. Not only music, but dance was also called as 'Karnatakamu'. A complete picture of Sangita, Sahitya and Natya prevalent in the court of the last two Nayaks is to be found in the 'Rajagopala Vilasam' a fine Telugu work by Chengalva Kalakavi.

A large number of dances prevalent at the time is found in Telugu works and these include Allika, Chaupada, Dandalaasyakam, Darupadam, Desi, Gujjari, Jakkini, Perani, Sabdam, Kuravanji etc. The names of a number of Rajadasis who had specialized in particular types of dance are given such as Rupavati for Chaupada,

Champakavalli for Sabdachintamani, Murti for Jakkini, Komalavalli for Korvai, Bhagirathi for Perani and so on. These names would indicate that they were Devadasis of Tamil origin. Recently a well-known dancer of Andhra Pradesh has done research on these dance forms.

Dance of Serfoji's time

In 1959 the Sarasvati Mahal Library, Thanjavur, published a book 'Korvyache Sahityache Jinnas' containing dance compositions in Marathi by Raja Serfoji which came as an eye-opener to many. Each Nirupana in this collection contains 18 compositions set in the same raga and the order followed by the ruler shows that all the 18 items were being performed in his time. Only a few of them viz. Sabdam, Varnam, Padam, Kavuttuvam and Tillana have survived in the present day Bharata Natyam. One or two of the forms are danced in the Bhagavata Mela tradition. The word 'Jakkini' is stated to be associated with Persia but strangely enough it is found in the 'Koyil Olugu' a history of the Srirangam temple. The composition called 'Servai' (perhaps Sevai) is none other than our Alarippu but the other forms have been unearthed by Acharya Parvathikumar of Bombay. Some of the dance forms of the Nayak period seem to have gone out of vogue during the Maratha period and some more added.

The Tanjore Quartette

The advent of the Tanjore Quartette, Chinniah, Ponniah, Sivanandam and

Vadivelu marks a new era in the history of Bharata Natyam, as it led to the introduction of the present pattern of a recital viz. Alarippu, Jathisvaram, Sabdam, Padavarnam, Padam, Ragamalika and Tillana. At the time of Serfoji's death in 1832, Chinnaiah, the eldest among the Quartette was 32 and Vadivelu, the youngest was 22. Originally they were Oduvars of Tamil origin and were brought into Tanjore to recite Tevaram and do Nattuvangam at the Big Temple there. They learnt music from Muthusvami Dikshitar and also became proficient in Telugu and Sanskrit to the extent of writing compositions in those languages in addition to Tamil. They served Sivaji (1833-1855), the successor of Serfoji, for a longer period and composed songs in his praise. The most gifted and versatile among the brothers was Vadivelu who migrated to Trivandrum to become the Asthana Vidvan of Svati Tirunal. He died there in 1847, the year in which Tyagaraja and Svati Tirunal also passed away. The other three were also patronized by Svati Tirunal and the ruler of Mysore and wrote compositions in their praise.

The compositions of the Quartette form the backbone of the Bharata Natyam performances of today, but the editions of these songs need complete revision from the chronological point of view. Much of what they popularized must have been handed down to them by their forbears who belonged to the time of ruler Tulaja or even before. The Prabandhas of Venkatamakhi and Ramaswami

Dikshitar, the varnams of Svati Tirunal and a Suladi have been printed without disclosing the name of the composers.

The Navasandhi Kavuttuvams and the Panchamurti Kavuttuvam have been copied from the 'Natanaadi Vaadya Ranjanam' written by one Gangaimuttu Nattuvanar of Tirunelveli and published with the help of Ambalavana Navalar. This work also contains Kavuttuvams on Kali of Tiruvalangadu, Vishnu of Tiruchengodu, Andal of Srivilliputtur, Chokkanathar of Madurai and Mahalinga of Darukavanam, also four Telugu sabdams composed by Melattur Kasinathayya and dedicated to ruler Pratapa Simha (1741-1764) of Tanjore. These include the Manduka Sabdam which is very popular in Kuchipudi dance recitals.

The present Alarippu - Tillana arrangement of our Bharata Natyam recitals is the most logical and also follows texts like the Sangita Muktavali. The Alarippu is a pure Nritya item found in many forms of dance as an invocation dance and is known by different names like Pushpanjali. This may be compared to a warming up item like the Tanavarnam in a music concert. This is followed by the Jathisvaram which is again another Nritya item performed with simple Adavu patterns. The Sabdam is the first item performed with Abhinaya. This was called Yasogiti formerly. It invariably consists of four lines of literature and is commenced with Kambhoji in Misra Chapu tala.

The Varna is the piece-de-resistance

in a modern Bharata Natyam recital requiring skill in Abhinaya, Tala and the execution of intricate Adavu Jatis. Padavarnams are compositions in Sringara Rasa or in praise of a deity, king or patron and contain a Pallavi, Anupallavi, Chittasvara, Charanam, Svara and Svara-Sahitya. Abhinaya performed to the singing of Pallavi, Anupallavi and Sahitya of the Chittasvaras is alternated with increasingly complex accelerated Jatis, Tirmanams and Adavus, similarly for the Charanas, Svaras and Svara Sahityas.

The 'Padam' is a unique type of composition which plays an important role in the present day Bharata Natyam recitals. The Natya Sastra of Bharata mentions the Padam as an indispensable constituent of the Gandharva. Bharata has used the work 'Padam' in the sense of Sahitya of songs to be used in a drama for Abhinaya. The characteristics of Padam are that it is intended for Nritya or dance with gesticulations. A Padam should be full of Bhava or emotional appeal and the motif is gradually expanded in the Charana culminating in a climax in the last Charana.

Kalidasa and Jayadeva have used the term 'Padam' in different contexts. But the fact that Jayadeva's Ashtapadis were being employed for Abhinaya in dance recitals is clear from the work 'Pada Abhinaya Manjari' written by Vasudeva Vachasundara of Kashmir in which Abhinaya has been indicated for each word of the Sahitya in the Bharata Natyam style. This work has been published by the Sarasvati Mahal Library.

Today the Padam is a well-defined composition, known for its slow tempo, saturation with the Sringara Rasa and Nayaka-Nayika Bhava as its motif. The composers have drawn their inspiration from poetic works like the 'Sringara Tilaka', the 'Amaru Sataka', the 'Rasamanjari' of Bhanudatta and 'Sringara Manjari' of Saint Akbar Shah. In a Telugu work called 'Sringara Rasa Manjari' by an unknown author, the Padams of Kshetrajna are cited as examples for describing Nayaka - Nayika Bhedas.

The Padam plays an important role in the present day Bharata Natyam recitals and is the mainstay for the Abhinaya part of the programme. Only mature artistes can do justice to Padams and it is idle to expect very young girls to depict the emotions, however well they are trained.

The present day recitals are concluded with Javalis and Tillanas, but the latter is more important from the dance point of view as it is full of Sollukattus and adds tempo to the concluding part of the performance. Occasionally a short Charana in praise of a God or a king is added at the end. Tillanas are older than Javalis.

I wish to refer to two allied dance forms of South India which are as old as the Bharata Natyam, if not older than the Sadi. The first of these is the Bhagavata Mela Nataka the main centre of which is Melattur. The art was also being practised at Sulamangalam, Saliangalam, Uttukadu, Nallur and Tepperumanallur, all in the Tanjore District of Tamil Nadu.

During the reign of the Nayak rulers of Tanjore several villages were donated to Brahmins who were experts in dance. A number of such families appear to have migrated from the Kuchipudi area in Andhra Pradesh and settled down in these villages to establish the Bhagavata Mela tradition on the model of the Kuchipudi dance tradition. The earliest to arrive was Narayana Tirtha, a sanyasin of Advaitic persuasion, who wrote the 'Krishna Lila Tarangini' on the model of the 'Gita Govinda' and also established a Bhajan tradition at Varahur.

The Bhagavata Mela tradition is closer to the Uparupaka concept than the solo Bharata Natyam as the former is Natya in its real meaning. A number of dance dramas were written in Telugu and danced during temple festivals entirely by the males of the village concerned. The main playwright was Melattur Venkatarama Sastri, who was a contemporary of Tyagaraja, and he wrote about a dozen such dramas some of which are presented even today.

The three aspects of the histrionic art viz. Nritta, Nritya and Natya find full scope in these dramas. The footwork, the movements of the body, Adavu Jatis and Tirmanams closely follows the Bharata Natya tradition and Abhinaya follows the accepted conventions. The present exponents of this art are all amateurs engaged in different vocations but they assemble at Melattur every year and perform the dramas during festivals. The music is purely Karnatic classical. Unless immediate steps are taken to

resuscitate this dance form and make it presentable in cities, it might become a matter of the past in the coming years.

The second type of dance-drama is the Kuravanji (literally meaning a 'Kuratti') which is another product of the Tamil soil. These dance-dramas were originally being performed in temples by female dancers and the technique employed was that of the classical Sadir Nautch. Tanjore again became the centre of this tradition with hundreds of Devadasis being attached to the Brihadisvara temple.

The Tyagesar Kuravanji, by an unknown author, which used to be performed at the Tyagaraja temple at Tiruvarur during the time of Shahaji (1684-1710) was the most famous of the Kuravanjis. Later nearly a dozen such works came to be written in Tamil on several deities and patrons like Sarabhoji and these offer excellent material for enacting dance-dramas by competent dancers. The Chitrakavya variety of the Uparupaka can be seen in Kuravanji dance-dramas which give plenty of scope for Vipralambha Sringara, the Sakhi playing an important role as the Nayika's messenger. The central character in Kuravanjis is, however, the Kuratti, the gypsy fortune-teller and special folk tunes and dances are employed for her part. Otherwise, the music is purely Karnatic.

During the past three decades there has been, in the dance field, a development which may be called an explosion. Dozens of dance schools have come into existence and hundreds

of girls are practising Bharata Natyam today as a supplementary qualification. This has come in for caustic criticism from some quarters but the onward march of the art cannot be arrested by such prophets of doom. The revival of interest in this prestigious art form of Tamil Nadu has done the art a lot of good. Hundreds of dance compositions have been unearthed, published and choreographed. Modern techniques are being adopted for costumes, stage decor, lighting and publicity. The printed programmes and brochures greatly enlighten the average viewer and enable him to appreciate the art better than ever before.

Bharata Natyam is on the march, sensitive to all the winds that blow in the sphere of world dance and reacting to exotic influences with some side of its genius. The future is perhaps going to be the golden age in its long and colourful history.

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The dance concert was codified, rearranged, beautified and standardized by the great Tanjore Quartette. The dance concert begins with items that are invocatory, followed by the major item, the Varnam, which is an exhaustive opening up of a striking balance of both Nrithya (mainly pure dance - Nrittha - with interpretation) and Abhinaya (entirely interpretative and emotion - revealing, quasi-acting dance).

The items that precede the fulcrum - like Padavarnam (sometimes Tanavarnam is also presented) are: Alaarippu, Kautthuwam, Pushpaanjali, Thodayamangalam, Sthuthi, Jathisvaram, Svarajathi, and Sabdam.

(Two or three or four of them will only be presented). Next follow items that are chiefly for different types of Abhinaya.

The post-varnam items will be Keerthana, Padam, Javali, Ragamaalika, Virutham, Daru, Devarnama, Thiruppugazh, Thillana and the concluding benedictory item, the Mangalam (four or five or six of them will only be presented).

Courtesy: Sangeetha Laalithya Lahari by Bangalore Mukund, (Chapter VIII).

A QUEST FOR BEAUTY

by Smt. Indu Raman*

The world celebrates the Birth Centenary Year of Rukmini Devi Arundale from 2003-2004. A Brahmin who was taught dance by a Devadasi, she transformed the status of dance and dancers.

It was a cool winter evening in December 1955. Nearly a thousand people sat under the spreading branches of the giant banyan tree in Adyar, Madras. They waited with bated breath to witness an event, the announcement of which shook the very foundations of the orthodox community. The cream of the intellectual and the political elite of Madras had threatened to boycott the function, but some of them were also present that evening. The suspense was electrifying. The lights dimmed, the curtains parted and for two hours a beautiful Brahmin lady kept them all enthralled. Thunderous applause greeted the end of the performance, which many have hailed as a spiritually elevating experience. And a legend was born. Belonging to a traditional, conservative but unorthodox family, Rukmini Devi grew up in an environment of the new values perpetrated by the Theosophical Society spearheaded by Dr. Annie Besant and Colonel Olcott in India.

In 1930, 26-year-old had already scandalized the Brahmin community by marrying Dr. George Arundale, an

Australian Theosophist 20 years her senior. Arundale eventually proved to be the guiding force, with whom Rukmini Devi flowered into a multi-faceted personality. As theosophists they travelled extensively meeting many artists, leaders and educationists.

A chance meeting, with the legendary Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova not only inspired Rukmini Devi to learn ballet, but also to explore the rich dance traditions of India.

Dance in South India had come to be associated with the *devadasis*, the low and the lewd. The British did their bit by banning 'nautch' performances in public. Most Brahmin families conformed to the strict taboo on this art. When Rukmini Devi wanted to learn dance, she faced stiff opposition from all quarters. It was a famous *devadasi*, Mylapore Gowri Ammal, who secretly initiated her into 'Sadir' or 'Dasi Attam' as the dance was then called. Almost 30 then, Rukmini Devi mastered the art in two years and brought in a wave of change with reformatory zeal. The content, costume and presentation was so transformed that she gave it a new name -- *Bharata*

* Smt. Indu Raman is a student of Kalakshetra and was fortunate to receive training in the inspiring presence of Rukmini Devi. A writer/dancer, Indu Raman was the patron and Chairman of Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natya Vidya Sangam, from 1993-2002.

Natyam. Her own performances contributed to unveiling the true beauty and dignity of our rich heritage.

In 1936, Rukmini Devi established an institute where dance, music, Sanskrit and art could be taught -- Kalakshetra, the temple of fine art. Under this canopy, great musicians, composers, scholars and dancers came together. The sylvan surroundings of this commune have nurtured artistes, inspired beauteous creations and revived dying art forms ever since.

The Arundale couple expanded their efforts to include other forms of education too. In 1939, they invited their friend Madame Maria Montessori, to establish the first Montessori School in India. A library of rare and precious Tamil manuscripts on palm leaves was gifted to this mushrooming campus. Around the same time, a weaving department was inaugurated to promote Indian silk, handlooms, vegetable dyes and traditional designs.

Rukmini Devi's sophisticated tastes and innate artistry found expression in creating gorgeous saris. She revived the forgotten Indian motifs like '*rudraksha*' and '*gopurams*' and used earthy colour combinations which are considered *haute couture* even today.

Nestled in the densely wooded, landscaped complex on the sands of the Adyar beach, is the imposing structure of the Bharata Kalakshetram. An auditorium for seating a few hundred, it is aesthetically built according to the tenets laid down in Bharata's *Natya*

Sastra. To see the famous dance-dramas choreographed by Rukmini Devi in this setting is an experience of a lifetime.

Classes are conducted in thatched huts arranged with a calculated casualness, giving it an appearance of an ashram of yore. Rukmini Devi offered refuge to many Buddhist Lamas and children who migrated to India from Tibet. Two high schools, a Craft Education & Research Centre and cottages for resident staff also find a place in Kalakshetra. Rukmini Devi's love for animals often prompted her to say, "Animals are my friends and I don't eat my friends".

She was Chairman of India's Animal Welfare Board, Head of the World Vegetarian Congress and also Vice-President of Beauty without Cruelty, a London-based organization. As Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha, she piloted the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Bill in 1960.

Rukmini Devi's queenly beauty, grace and eloquence charmed audiences the world over. She continued her work undaunted by the death of Dr. Arundale in 1940. Her missionary zeal exalted dance as an art form, restored pride in the hearts of Indians and shattered misguided myths prevailing in society. Kalakshetra gave refuge to artistes who would have otherwise languished unknown in their villages. Her life was a quest for beauty which, she believed is a manifestation of divinity.

'Atthai' (aunt) as she was affectionately called, constantly advised her students "Learn to live life beautifully in thought, word and action". She exhorted them to spread the spiritual message of our arts. Even after her demise on February 24, 1986, Kalakshetra continues to fondly follow these guidelines and students religiously uphold the tradition they have imbibed, wherever they are.

While exceptionally talented dancers like Krishnaveni, Janardan and Balagopal, had dedicated their lives to the institution, others like Yamini Krishnamurthy, the late, Sanjukta Panigrahi, the Dhananjayan couple and Leela Samson have made their mark as performing artistes.

Rukmini Devi was a recipient of the Padma Bhushan and Prani Mitra, awarded by the Government. Santiniketan honoured her with the title "Desikottamma" while the MP

Government offered her the Kalidas Sanmaan. In what would have been a fitting culmination to a trail-blazing career devoted to the upliftment of her country, Rukmini Devi, was invited to be the President of India in 1977. The offer was graciously declined as Rukmini Devi was content to devote all her attention to the arts.

She became a cult figure and pioneer in fields as varied as art and education, politics and social work, as well as aesthetics and philosophy. Rukmini Devi's vision, grit and conviction, is all the more amazing when we remember that it was more than a decade before India's Independence, that her achievements made history. □

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In a function held on Monday the 15th September 2003, to celebrate the 87th birthday of Bharat Ratna Dr. M. S. Subbulakshmi, the 'Sri Shanmukhananda M. S. Subbulakshmi Best Teacher Award' was presented to Smt. T. R. Balamani. The award included a cash prize of Rs. 25,000/-, a shawl and a bronze icon of Lord Shanmukha.

Another award disbursed during the same function was under the 'Sri Shanmukhananda Vayovridha Kalakara Masika Artha Sahaya Yojana'. Under this award, the intention was to provide monetary support to the aged and poor musicians of eminence, to enable them to lead their residual life with dignity. The award was made to the veteran mridangam maestro, Vidwan Shri. Kuttalam Vishwanatha Iyer, who was present in person to receive it.

SANGEETHA KALARATNA DR. K. VENKATALAKSHAMMA GUARDIAN OF MYSORE DANCE TRADITION

A Tribute by Sangeetha Kalaratna Sri. B.V.K. Sastry

The doyen of the Mysore School of Bharathanatyam, Sangeetha Kalaratna Dr. K. Venkatalakshamma passed away on 3rd July 2002 at the ripe old age of 96. The world of dance thus lost one of the greatest exponents of the Mysore School of Bharathanatyam.

We deem it a privilege to publish an article written on her by the veteran musicologist, Sangeetha Kalaratna Shri B. V. K. Sastry. We are particularly privileged to publish this article in this issue of "Shanmukha", which is primarily dedicated to dance.

- Editor

Fifteen years ago, the venerable Madras Music Academy in departure from convention chose famous dancer Balasaraswati to preside over its 47th Annual Conference.

Conservative brows were raised at this news and a minor controversy followed.

How could a dancer occupy a chair mainly meant for music vidwans? And what should be the title so conferred? The usual Sangeetha Kalanidhi which would be incongruous? Or something else?! and so on. And much of

this anxiety was due to the inbuilt prejudice against dance and especially dancers.

Not much thought was given to the absurdity of this line of thinking in the light of what the ancient texts define as music. The texts aver that Sangeetha is the combination of Gita (song), Vadya (instrumental) and Nritya (dance). As

such, it was not the privilege of only musicians to chair such conferences. A dancer was also eligible to preside and receive the title of *Sangeetha Kalanidhi*.

But when veteran danseuse Mysore Venkatalakshamma was chosen to preside over the 21st Annual Music Conference of the Bangalore Gayana Samaja, there was not even a whisper of any controversy.

Much has happened during the past decades. The monopoly over dance has shifted from hereditary families to various sections of society and the

art form has also gained respectability and popularity leading to a stage where dancers seem to out-number music vidwans.

Perhaps Venkatalakshamma herself did not expect a Sangeetha Sabha to invite her to chair a music conference. It is an index of the respect with which she is held by different sections of people in



the field of performing arts.

Venkatalakshamma at 83, is perhaps among the oldest living dance practitioners in the country. Honours have come to her unsolicited. She has always led a sort of sheltered life, never obscured but not too conspicuous either, which of course is in the best durbar tradition. I should recall an instance to illustrate this point.

One day during the early 1960s, I called on the late G. Venkatachalam, eminent connoisseur and critic. During our conversation, I casually mentioned that a senior dancer of the Mysore palace was in town and if he (Venkatachalam) was interested, we could invite her for a chat.

Earlier in the day, I had dropped in at the AIR station on some work and had found Venkatalakshamma about to record some Kannada Javalis. Venkatachalam was excited at the information and despatched a friend with a car to fetch Venkatalakshamma.

As we did not have much time at our disposal, (Venkatalakshamma was scheduled to leave for Mysore in about an hour's time) Venkatachalam requested her to render *abhinayam* to any song she favoured.

Seated on the carpet, she slowly started humming and commenced with the verse *Atha Kathamapi Yaaminim*. This is the introductory verse for the 17th *Ashtapadi* of *Gita Govinda* and reflects the fluctuating moods of a *Khandita Nayika* or an angry lady.

It was a description of Radha, fully dressed and bejewelled waiting for Lord Krishna who plays traunt. Feeling desolate and depressed, she removes all her ornaments.

When Lord Krishna finally turns up in the morning. Radha is very angry and rebukes him. Singing the verse herself, Venkatalakshamma started interpreting it.

In a short while, she got into the mood of the *Nayika*, visually conveying her various sentiments and their nuances underlying in the verse, sometimes embellishing them with her own ideas.

Her expressive face recorded a whole gamut of emotions from the angry to the amorous to the adoring - it was an interpretation, rich with bhava.

She no doubt followed the traditional stylised vocabulary but it was her inner feeling that imbued the *abhinaya* with a rare beauty and lustre that transcended virtuosity to project the personality of an angry Radha.

She followed it up in the *Ashtapadi Yaahi Maadhava*. At its conclusion, Venkatachalam who had witnessed the scene in a sort of a trance, applauded and turning suddenly towards me asked in a tone matching the one of the *Ashtapadi*, "How is it you never told me about this lady all these days, denying me a fascinating experience?"

In a couple of days, he went to Mysore and spent hours witnessing Venkatalakshamma's *abhinayam*, *Pada*, *Javali* etc., apart from discussing related matters with her.

An illustrated article on the Mysore school of Bharatanatyam in the bulletin of the Sangeet Natak Akademi at Delhi brought Venkatalakshamma and other dancers of Mysore into national focus.

During the late 1950's each State had started taking stock of its own cultural heritage to discover its own distinct identity. Thus, little-known dance styles like the Kuchipudi and the Odissi

surfaced and caught the popular eye, commanding public attention.

The Mysore style of dance drew the attention of dance enthusiasts and was also a subject of debate as many could not discern any major difference between the Bharatanatyam that was being practiced and the Mysore style.

But it also made dance enthusiasts in the State examine the regional traditions and identify features that could be at variance with the Tanjore School, investing the local traditions with a distinct identity.

In the ultimate analysis, it was obvious that there was not much difference between the Bharatanatyam traditions of Tanjore and Mysore except for emphasis in certain parts.

The emphasis of Mysore was on *abhinayam* and the corresponding wealth of material in that respect. Thus it struck like a dialect of the same language i.e. Mysore, Coastal, Dharwad varieties of Kannada.

Not without reason because dance in Mysore was confined mostly to temples and the palace. Many famous names among Mysore dancers belonged to the temple tradition.

But Mysore was also the first to abolish dance service in temples about 90 years ago. The art then fell into disgrace and suffered a setback.

The art was preserved in some of the hereditary families with traditions of dance. While a small section received royal patronage, the others were patronised by the rich sections of the society more for ceremonial than artistic considerations.

A marriage in any of the homes of these rich patrons would be incomplete

without a *mela* which was also considered a status symbol. On the other hand, it formed a part of the socio-religious functions in the palace like festivals, marriages etc.

The dancers naturally had to build up a repertoire of compositions that suited their occasions. The accent, however, was on *abhinayam*.

For this purpose, the dancers had equipped themselves with rich material - *Chitra Natya* verses from classical Sanskrit, Kannada literature, *Gita Govinda*, *Amaru Sataka*, *Pada*, *Javali*, etc. Though the gatherings were ceremonial, scholars were also present and the performance needed an intellectual appeal.

And thus dance in Mysore became part of the durbari culture. Dancers employed in the palace had little opportunity for outside exposure. As a result, notwithstanding her talent and deep scholarship, Venkatalakshamma could not come into the larger national perspective because the prime period of her life was spent as a *Asthana Vidhushi*.

She entered palace service in her 22nd year and was in her early fifties when she retired.

Thanks to the Sangeet Natak Akademi, she earned national recognition shortly after her retirement. Honours came to her albeit slowly.

She received the Karnataka State Sangeetha Nataka Academy Award in 1962, two years later the national award from the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1977 she was conferred D.Litt. by Mysore University and though belated, the Rajyotsava award was conferred on her last year. Many other institutions have also honoured her.

She was born in a village near Kadur in 1906. Those were the days when dance was jealously preserved as a family tradition.

Surprisingly Venkatalakshamma, a rank outsider, managed to learn dance and attain pre-eminence as an exponent.

She hails from the Lambani Community. Then how was she drawn towards dance? According to her, it was her high-quality performance in a school day function which attracted the attention of a local *joyisar* (astrologer) who predicted a bright future for the lass if she trained herself in dance.

Spurred on by this prediction, she came to Mysore and was fortunate to come under the tutelage of an outstanding danseuse of the day - Jeti Thayamma. She underwent training in the old gurukula system and made her debut when she was barely 12.

Her affection and loyalty to her Guru seem boundless. "Our Guru was a stern disciplinarian when she was teaching and brooked no faults. She was always after perfection, not merely preaching but could translate it into action convincingly. It was tough work for us students because when she took up any number for *abhinayam*, the variations in the interpretation seemed inexhaustive because of the richness, of their imagination. Each variation seemed fresh and carried a touch of originality. Notwithstanding the range and depth of her scholarship, Thayamma was very humble, more like a mother after class hours," says Venkatalakshamma reminiscing.

Venkatalakshamma likes teaching and ran an institution, "*Bharatakala Niketan*", in Mysore after retirement from the palace till she was appointed Reader

in dance at Mysore University where she served for nearly 10 years. Her best pupil is Shakuntala, her own grand daughter, now teaching dance in the place of her grandmother at the University.

The state has also made use of her services. Venkatalakshamma conducted a short term course in *abhinayam*, organised by the State Sangeetha Nataka Academy in 1976. Six years later, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Chairperson of the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi, invited her to conduct a longer course at Bangalore. Her platform appearances though not numerous were a real experience.

Though the vocabulary is stylised, the interpretation is not sterile. It is spontaneous and has depth of feeling. Even such highly erotic numbers like the *Amaru Shatakam* verses are transformed into artistic pieces providing an experience that is more aesthetic than erotic, thanks to the neat balance between the serene and sensual.

Now in the evening of her life, Venkatalakshamma is still alert in mind and with her softly modulated voice recalls old times and interesting incidents. If she writes her memoirs, it could certainly form part of the history of dance in Karnataka.

She has not ignored the future too. She is deeply concerned about young dancers in the making but regrets a lack of seriousness and hard work among them which are needed to attain quality and perfection. She deplores the tendency towards short cuts and easy courses to achieve success which shape these young ones into soulless puppets instead of lively dancers.

Courtesy: Gayana Samrajya July 2003, Vol XXI, No. 7

"COMMUNICATING TO GODS, KINGS, AND ORDINARY MEN"

by NALINI RAGHU

All the arts of this subcontinent are eloquent expressions of an ancient civilization, whose timeless wisdom continues to evoke the passionate search of man for conscious identity with God. A long dialogue in the *Vishnu Darmottara*, between the Rishi Vraja and Sage Markandeya emphasises the continuity and flow of one art to another.

Bharata's *Natya Sastra* says that this art is not merely for pleasure but it exhibits all the emotions existing in the world, yielding the fruit of righteousness to those who follow the moral law, a restraint for the unruly, and a discipline for the followers of the rule. It creates wisdom in the ignorant and learning in scholars. It affords sports to the kings and endurance to the sorrow-stricken. It is replete with diverse moods, passions of the soul. It uses the best, the middling and the low deeds of all mankind, affording excellent counsel of a timeless variety.

Man wanted to communicate to God the love for Him through dance. Why through dance and why not through just poetry or by painting Him? It is possible, but dance is a better medium. How?

Vedanta says: God is the creation. There is no distinction between God and His creation. He has not created the universe like a poet who creates a poem. The relationship between God and His creation is just like that of a dancer and his dance. You can separate poetry from the poet; a painting from a painter. But

when the dancer stops, the dance stops. The voice of a musician can be taped erasing his identity; on the other hand the video taped dance cannot erase the identity of the dancer and thus cannot remove the dancer from the art. Also when you communicate through dance, you are using 80% of your energy, leaving only 20% for the other four senses. The eyes thus become the supreme dictatorial force.

When a man loses his sight, his other senses become sharper. It is not the same the other way about. When he loses his sense of hearing or voice, his observation may get better but the efficiency of his vision remains the same. As a visual art form, dance is an effective vehicle of communication and there was a time in India, when dance as an art form formed part of rituals seeking to communicate to God.

We must understand that it is not just one person communicating to God. Dance is created, built on the theory that this fine art is a co-operative venture in which there are two parties. On the one side there is the artist, who seeks to give expression to his or her feelings towards God and on the other side, there is the connoisseur who understands the idiom and feels God along with the artist. Both are rewarded with aesthetic enjoyment. The end product is the aesthetic emotion towards which the artist and the connoisseur have to work, to communicate with each other and together realise God.

The lyrics of dance music had from time immemorial, centered around the Divine Being. They depicted the profound teachings of Hindu metaphysics. After invasions in the North, even though dancers depicted Gods like Radha and Krishna, the stress was on the entertainment value. The spiritual approach was slowly pushed to the background and the communication was to kings who patronised the art.

The Lucknow School is celebrated for its lyrical and poetical quality laid down by Thakur Prasad, the court dancer of Wajid Ali Shah. The Nawab himself was a dancer, musician and poet, and is believed to have introduced *Thumri* which are poems with few lines which are interpreted in different ways by the dancer.

In contrast the South retained the spiritual approach to dance. With the fall of Vijayanagar, the emergence of Nayakkars and the arrival of Europeans, a new period of history was unfolded and was having a significantly different effect on this art form.

Raja Sahaji introduced Marathi songs keeping intact the Carnatic style of music. He had composed more than 1000 songs in praise of Thyagesa. It is in his court, thanks to the presence of the Tanjore Quartette that the art thrived in a methodical manner. Interestingly enough, although some of the above compositions had the king as the hero, the scope of interpretation in religious terms existed amply since the kings were often addressed by the name of the deity of the kingdom. Thus the Bhakti movement continued to thrive, embracing the totality of the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects. Sometimes when the

king's name was not the same as the deity, the composers furtively introduced a line or two in the praise of God. For example, Sivanandam (one of the Tanjore Quartette) in his *Thodi Varnam*, praises Shivaji Maharaja, as a devotee of Shiva. Here the dancer can indulge in *Bhakti Rasa*.

As time rolled on, and during the British rule, the custom of dancing in temples declined. The kings no longer gave the kind of security and patronage that the dancers were used to. Now the dancers were communicating neither to God nor to the kings, but to ordinary people with ordinary thoughts. Sometimes even if the song was in praise of Muruga, it was entertaining some rich man whose name was Murugan or Kandaswamy.

Thanks to the new spirit engendered by progressive elements of the society, not only was further degeneration of the dance format prevented, but it was also elevated to the position of the noble art in which it finds itself today. Notable among those who accomplished this significant turnaround, was Rukmini Devi of Kalakshetra, whose birth centenary is being observed this year.

The present day platforms see dancers performing compositions of contemporary composers such as Papanasam Sivan (*Nattakkurunji Varnam*) and Lalgudi Jayaraman (*Neelambari Varnam*), which are *Bhakti* laden. This shows that *Bhakti* continues to survive as a corner stone of the Bharatanatyam even today.

Ofcourse there is a trend to dance to film music, to western orchestral

music or to social themes, but these trends may be transient. It may appeal to the common masses but the beauty of traditional dance will always be a source of inspiration and fulfillment. The old lyrics meant for kings and ordinary men are also used even now by the

dancers. But no longer do we find the dancer or rather want to find the dancer communicating to us, forgetting the Omnipresent. Now she communicates to God, along with ordinary people and kings, who are no longer kings. □

The six major classical forms of dance today are : (1) Kathak of most of North India; (2) Bharata Natyam of Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry; (3) Kathakali of Kerala; (4) Kuchupudi of Andhra Pradesh; (5) Odissi of Orissa and (6) Manipuri of Manipur.

All these dance forms have got common roots in Bharatha's Naatya Sastra. At a dance concert, all of them present a set of variety of dance compositions to exhibit the energy, vivacity, dynamism, technical brilliance, executive skill and the infinite variant beauty of their respective arts. They all have the same basic similarities.

Kathak is known for its intricate foot-work, jathis and speed; Bharata Natyam for its graceful movements and body-balance, postures and exquisite music and jathis; Kathakali for its difficult movements and portrayal of characters, (Mohini Aattam - an offshoot for females, a speciality, has become recently well-known); Kuchupudi for its delicate expressiveness and fast movements; Odissi for its variety of beautiful postures and curved movements and Manipuri for its serene grace and amazing piruets. Karnataka's special dance Yakshagaana is semi-folk and semi-classical, now gaining popularity in great strides.

The Bharata Natyam in particular is an extremely sensitive and subtle art, is based on the important principles laid down by Sri Bharata Muni in his all-encompassing omnibus Naatya Sastra. Bhaava, Rasa, Abhinaya and Naatya are all incorporated along with Sangeetha and Nrithya. Thus Bharata Natyam is wholesome in incorporating the entire classical idiom in the dancing art.

Courtesy: Sangeetha Laalithya Lahari by Bangalore Mukund, (Chapter VIII).

VIDWAN - RASIKA RELATIONSHIP

by Narada

How do current day interactions between audiences and Vidwans in the field of Carnatic Music compare with those of their counterparts say 50 or 60 years ago? One's experience would indicate that there have been certain subtle changes in approach, which have led to a gradual degradation in the Vidwan - Rasika relationship and in the overall quality of Carnatic concerts in general.

In the old days, audiences approached the musician and the concert with a certain degree of veneration. As a result, even on those occasions when they had paid for the ticket for a concert the rasikas did not view the concert as a commercial proposition in which some entertainment was to be expected in return for the payment made. Hence, the still widely held view that the customer is always right was not applicable to music recitals. In return the musician, while always having the predilections of the audience in mind, felt that the classicism of Carnatic music had to be preserved and that the guidelines that had been handed down from generation to generation for the exposition of Carnatic music had to be strictly followed.

Under such circumstances, the musician was clearly the leader and the audience was only too willing to be led through the labyrinthine pathways of Carnatic music. In general, there was no complex involved either of the superiority

or the inferiority kind and the relationship between the Vidwan and the Rasika was an easy one based on mutual respect and regard.

Today, however the situation is different. Larger numbers than ever before have, through either study or constant exposure become familiar with the basic aspects of Carnatic music. Such persons come to the concert hall with certain background knowledge and hence a certain degree of predetermined expectations in so far as the content and format of the concert are concerned. The crystallization of such expectation is, to a considerable extent influenced by other forms of music such as the North Indian style of classical music, Western classical music, Pop music and of course, Cinema music that one hears in profusion these days.

As a result, a certain amount of deviation from pure classicism is both expected and demanded and in today's environment in which the market place atmosphere tends to pre-dominate even in transactions relating to the fine arts, it is not surprising that many a musician is only too willing to oblige audiences by presenting the kind of whimsy flashily packaged music, which would draw applause and crowds, but would certainly not augur well for the future of classical Carnatic music.

The responsibility of this sorry state of affairs should indeed be shared equally by current day musicians and

audiences. The musician has the sacred duty to uphold and preserve the pure classical traditions and should not fall prey to the unreasonable demands of certain sections of the audience who are really in no position to judge the lines along which classical music should develop. One important reason for the weakness of many musicians in this regard is the fact that they are often anxious to ascend the stage long before they have mastered, at least to a reasonable degree, the Lakshana and Lakshya aspects of Carnatic music in its truest sense. Hence one encounters an imperfect battle between two contestants who are both relatively unqualified for a real contest.

On the one hand we have the musician who is not perfectly trained in his art and hence has no lofty traditions to uphold. He is only too anxious to please the audience so that the financial and commercial aspects of his musical transaction can be satisfactorily concluded. On the other hand, one has the group of rasikas who feel that the person who pays the piper, should call the tune and who therefore demand a certain degree of ego satisfaction in the form of satisfied musical expectations, however unjustified and unwarranted such expectations may be, the ultimate result is the near total disenchantment of the true rasika, who, unfortunately forms only a minority in any average concert.

Audiences of Carnatic Music

What has been the role played by the audience in the growth or decadence of Carnatic music during the past few

decades? About 60 years ago, when the microphone and its associated appendages had not taken firm root in the Carnatic music scene, music concerts in the towns and villages were invariably associated with either marriages and other similar functions or with temple festivals. People walked six to seven kms from many surrounding villages.

Those were not the days of raging inflation or money consciousness, and it was not uncommon for all those who had assembled to listen to the concert, to be fed as part of the marriage or other festivities. The concerts invariably were held on the main street of the village, which was commandeered for the performance. The concert would commence after dinner at about nine or later in the night. The entire audience having been fed entirely at ease and the concert which would last anything from four to five hours used to be heard in pin drop silence.

Similarly, one had the privilege of listening to great Nadaswara Vidwans like Rajarathnam whose performance in temple festivals would start late in the night with the deity moving in through the principal streets of the village and the end of recital would coincide with the turn of the deity to the temple in the early hours of morning. An appreciative audience stood around the musician and his accompanists and moved along with the procession. One has heard ragas such as Abhogi, Shanmukhapriya and Kalyani being elaborated for as long as five hours, punctuated of course by extraordinary bursts of the very best of percussion support that great Thavil

Vidwans had to offer.

Such occasions were always pure and unalloyed listening pleasures when the artist and the audience were in tune and at ease. The clock and its movement was not a significant factor and the question of audiences having to think of mundane matters such as refreshments never arose. The result was great outpouring of musical brilliance which the audiences privileged to be present, would long cherish.

This state of affairs gradually gave way to concerts held during marriage functions at the time of receptions in the evening. In the early days, when the microphone had not made its advent, such concerts were an imposition both on the artists and the audience. The general noise level what with the coming and going of people and long lost friends and relations trying to exchange all the information relating to the intervening periods, the concert and its audibility took a distinct back seat.

Even for the few who cluttered around the musician, listening to the concert became a distinct effort. This state of affairs was sought to remedy by the use of the public address system and the result was an uneven contest between the background noise provided by the audience and the amplified music blaring through the loud speakers. Under such circumstances the musician gradually reached a stage where he would be distinctly ill at ease unless he could hear his own voice as dispatched and delivered via the microphone and the loudspeaker.

It is precisely this psychology that carried over to the sabha environment

and the musician was never satisfied until he could hear his own voice through electronic feedback. Another rationalisation for the need for this kind of feedback could be the bathroom music syndrome whereby any person fancying himself to be a musician is extremely pleased with his musical notes in the bathroom in view of the fact that his music gets reflected back to his own ears in a rather amplified manner. Whatever the explanation, the facts remain that many musicians of today are not satisfied even if their music can be clearly heard with the minimum of amplification, by the audience.

Such persistent demand for more than the minimum necessary amplification has also resulted in adverse form of audience response. When the music is so amplified that it can only be just heard, there is a tendency on the part of the audience to concentrate so as to ensure that they do not miss any of the nuances of the music. However when the volume reaches a distinctly higher level of audibility, the audience no longer needs to concentrate in order to hear the music. This results in a larger number of two way or group discussion during the concert on matters not necessarily related to music, and the result is two sources of sound, one that of the audience and the other that of the musical troupe, each vying with the other for attention.

Demands of Today's Audiences

Another important characteristic noticed in the modern Carnatic musician is his tendency to give way to the various

demands of the listening public in relation to favourite compositions that they would like to hear.

This kind of listener's requests would be perfectly in order in a light music or pop music concert in which after all it is the ability to thrash out the currently popular tunes that define the popularity of one orchestra or the other.

Such a rule cannot be transported to the areas of a classical music performance where there are well defined guidelines laid down in respect of the kinds of Ragas and Thalās that should be chosen and the way in which these should be arranged in order that the concert may be a well balanced, pleasing one.

Generally speaking an experienced Carnatic musician may not necessarily come to the stage with a completely predetermined programme for the evening although there have been exceptions to this rule as well. However, the fact is that the musician does have a predetermined pattern of exposition in mind, such a pattern can very easily be disturbed by requests for compositions that may not entirely fit into the overall pattern envisaged by the musician. The result very often is that a Cutcheri which starts off well and proceeds with great structural balance, suddenly loses purpose and direction, somewhere in the middle as a result of the musician having to accede to a flood of requests for various compositions from the audience.

It would be interesting to compare the current state of affairs in this regard to conditions that prevailed, say about fifty years ago.

Today the situation is different. Very often musicians arrive barely a few hours before the concert and there is little or no opportunity for them to interact with rasikas in order to ascertain their wishes. Furthermore a famous musician coming all the way to Bombay today, invariably accepts at least three or four engagements in as many days as a result of which he always has a bit of a problem in formulating the program for the various concerts. On the one hand, he has to ensure that there is no marked repetition of the same krithis or ragas in the various concerts, while on the other, he has to see to it that the broad guidelines in respect of Cutcheri patterns are followed. If one were to add to this a plethora of listener's requests, the confusion that would result is not difficult to envisage.

Concert Manners

A significant point of difference between Carnatic and Western recitals relates to the interval declared during western concerts. This does not apply to Carnatic music recitals. The situation is slightly different in respect of Hindustani recitals where an interval is customary. One could probably trace the habit of having intervals during Hindustani recitals to the fact that musical programmes in Hindustani invariably start late in the night and go on till the early hours of the next morning. Under such circumstances, it is understandable that an interval is essential.

However, when a Hindustani recital starts by six in the evening and is expected to conclude around nine or ten,

an interval is announced. The practice is probably not entirely indefensible because the initial weighty part of the program invariably lasts for an hour and half or so, after which a break would probably be relished both by the artistes and by the audience. In Carnatic music, however the duration of a recital is between three and four hours and the tempo of the recital is built up on the basis of the successive exposition of a number of krithis, some with raga preludes, some with niraval and swaraprasthara and some with both.

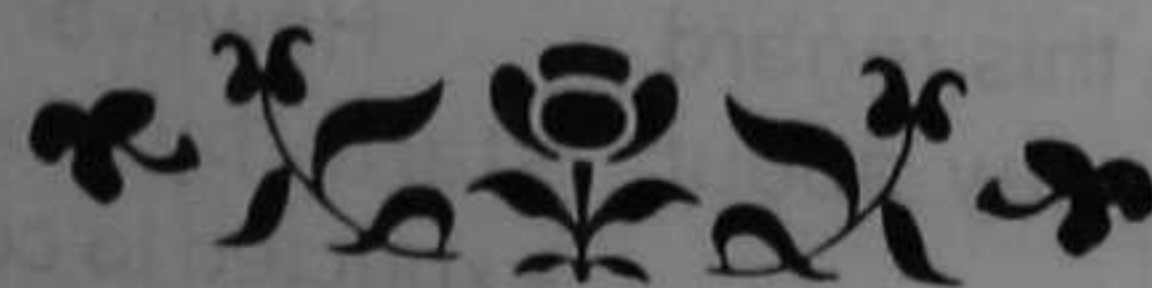
The average duration of each piece will vary anywhere between a few minutes and about 20 minutes. The duration of an elaborate Ragam, Thanam, Pallavi could some times be about forty five minutes to an hour. The tempo of the concert is built-up and sustained on the basis of a quick succession of krithis and raga alapanas. The late Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar was responsible for setting up such a Cutcheri Padhati. In such a scenario the announcement of an interval tends to result in the tempo flagging. Even when there are unpremeditated intervals such as those arising from troublesome Thanpuras, Violins or Mridangams needing frequent adjustments on the stage, both the musician and the audience tend to get restless. Thus it would seem that whereas an interval may have become an established fact in Hindustani music such a procedure is not entirely suited in a Carnatic music

performance.

Another phenomenon in Carnatic concerts is the tendency of a large number of members of the audience to leave the hall, albeit temporarily, after a major piece has been brilliantly rendered by the musicians on the stage. At the close of such a piece, there is thunderous applause and one can see a number of persons getting up as if in relief after the tension has been built up gradually by the electrifying performance of the artists. This aspect of audience behaviour, I presume cannot be entirely overcome. On the contrary, one hopes that there will be more occasions of this type where the performance touches really great heights. One other part of a Carnatic concert where the audience behaviour could be the subject of interesting study is the end of the concert when the Mangalam is sung. About thirty years ago, it was quite natural to see people getting up as soon as Vidvans started singing Mangalam so much so that by the time the brief Mangalam was concluded the hall would be half empty. I shall vividly remember the great Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer specifically requesting audiences not to get up from their seats until the Mangalam was completely sung.

These days, audience behaviour has improved very considerably and very few people get up to leave the hall when the Mangalam is being sung.

Courtesy : Economic Times



MUSIC APPRECIATION - Part II

by Dr. (Smt.) Geetha Ravikumar

Origin and History

India's music as in the case of the music of all countries is older than recorded history. The music of India, from the earliest times of which there is any record, has been closely associated with the 'Sama Veda', one of the four sacred Vedas of the Hindu religion. Scholars believe that parts of these four Vedas namely, Sama Veda, Rig Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda were written between 2000 and 1000 BC when Aryans began to invade India from the North West. While the high priest conducted the solemn rite of the soma drink offering to the God using the Atharva Veda, another priest is said to have sung chants from the Sama Veda. In Hindu temples today one can hear similar chants to the deity which doubtlessly are very old.

वेदानां सामवेदोऽस्मि

means vocal music derived from the Sama Veda was Lord Krishna himself.

The Vedic literature also flourishes various references of Vedic music. By Vedic music we mean the Samans with tunes. When the Rik stanzas were set to tones and tunes, they were called the Vedic music, "Samagana". The tones of the Vedic music were in downward movement (avarohana-krama). Generally three, four, five and six tones were used in the Samagana. The Vedic

tones are called the "Yama" meaning the root which used to control, conduct and sustain the structure of the Samagana.

Indian musician's have claimed that a deity dwells in each of the seven notes (swaras) of the scale. Hindus believe that music is the foremost of the fine arts, the deity of which is Saraswati, consort of God Brahma. She is often pictured or represented in the form of an image seated upon a lotus flower and playing a stringed instrument (Vina). Rev. H. A. Popely writes, "In Hindu mythology the various departments of life learning are usually associated with different rishis and so to one of these is traced first instruction that men have received in the art of music. Bharata Rishi is said to have taught the art to the heavenly dancers (Apsaras) who afterwards performed before God Siva. The Rishi Narada, who wanders about the earth and heaven, singing and playing his Vina, taught music to men" (Popely-Music of India - Pg - 7).

When one turns from the myths and legends of ancient times to more modern days, one finds that Indian music was closely connected with temple worship and also that it was patronized by Rajahs (kings) and men of wealth. It was definitely known that in South India, in the early Christian era, the Chola Kings of Tanjore (now Tanjavur), the Pandian Kings of Madurai and the Chera Kings

in the parts of south-west India now known as the Kerala state were all patrons of art and music. In the famous Tamil work "Tirukkural" also believed to be the fifth Veda; we find references to certain ancient instruments. This internationally acclaimed work which comes under *Padhinenkeez Khanakku* was written by Tiruvalluvar about 2000 years ago. We come to know of some musical facts from this work such as the use of Flute and Yazh. It is composed of 1330 couplets.

In Silappadikaram (300 AD) mention is made of the drummer, the flute player, the Vina as well as the lute. This famous epic written by Ilango Adigal seems to contain a whole musical treatise. There are specimens of early Tamil songs. We came to know that the ancient Tamils used a scale of 22 shrutis. The words *Alagu* and *Mathirai* were used to devote Shruthi. This book contains some of the earliest expositions of the Indian musical scale giving the notes of the gamut and also the number of modes and ragas in use at that time. Captain C.R. Ray writes that the most flourishing stage of Indian music was during the period of Hindu Rajahs and until the eighth century. After that time there began the age of invasions by Mohammedan armies through the North-West. For the most part, these invaders were not interested in the traditional type of Hindu Music, but brought with them into India their own Persian and Arabic music. From A.D. 1000 or about four hundred years a fusion of the two kinds of music began

to take place.

Gradually two kinds of music evolved - the Hindustani or North Indian Music School which included new mixed music, and the Southern (Carnatic) School, which represented the old, Hindu type of music. The Southern School became much more unified and rigid as regards rules and terminology and maintained the purity of music to the maximum extent. The Northern School was much less unified and adhered less strictly to rules. The terminology of the two schools even today varies considerably.

About the 12th century A.D. North Indian music began to develop. There were two noted musicians of that time, Sarangadeva and Jayadeva. The former lived in the court of Yadava Dynasty in Deccan in the 13th century. At that time, the famous Maratha (Hindu) empire extended as far as south, as the Kaveri river. Sarangadeva probably came into contact with the music of the south as well as with that of the North. He wrote a very technical work in Sanskrit called the "Sangita Ratnakara".

Jayadeva was a great devotee of Lord Krishna. His outstanding work is a poem in Sanskrit called "Gita Govinda". It consists of 24 poems or songs on the theme of the love of Krishna for maid Radha.

The greatest development of music in North India took place under the patronage of the great Moghul (Mohammedan) emperors who ruled from Delhi from the fourteenth century

to the seventeenth century. At the beginning of this period, one famous musician at the court of Sultan Ali-ud-din was the singer Amir Khusru. He introduced the mode of singing which is a mixture of Persian and Indian modes, and several of the modern ragas. He is said to have invented the stringed musical instrument called the sitar. The great emperor Akbar who reigned from 1542 to 1605 was an exceedingly broadminded and tolerant monarch. He was deeply interested in science, religion and the arts. At his court he encouraged the renowned musician Tansen, whose master at Brindavan, Haridas Swami was an even greater musician.

Another outstanding musician of that age in South India was Purandaradasa (1484-1564). He is considered as "Pita-Maha" of Carnatic music. He composed enormous number of songs, about 4,75,000 in which the essence of Hindu scriptural teaching was presented. Pupils in his days began to study music by learning to sing the ancient raga called Mayamalavagaula. In the 17th century, there lived in Tanjore a musical scholar named Venkatamakhin, who laid down the 12-note system and the 72 Melakarta (Primary Ragas) of Carnatic music.

"Sangita Sara" of Vidyaranya has a very important place in the history of Indian music, especially of the South. There is a belief that the Melas are as old as the era of Vidyaranya (the first half of the 14th century). Thus the raga structure of classification of

Venkatamakhin became the basic system of modern Carnatic music. He wrote a famous treatise in Sanskrit called "Chaturdandi Prakashika" in the 17th century. In this treatise Venkatamakhin considers 19 Melas.

Tanjore was considered as the seat of Carnatic music. Tyagaraja (1767-1847), Muthuswamy Dikshitar (1776-1835), and Syama Sastri (1762-1827) constitute the Trinity of this system. Of these, Prof. P. Sambamoorthy writes "All three were devotees who spoke of God, and to whom God spoke". He further writes that Tyagaraja was as significant for Indian Music as Beethoven was for European Music (Detailed sketches will be given about the Trinity in a later article). Three more noted musicians of this period who may be mentioned are Gopalakrishna Bharati, Vedanayagam Pillai and M. Abraham Pandithar. Gopalakrishna Bharathi's famous work being "Nandanar Charitram" which he composed in Tamil and published in 1861. Vedanayagam Pillai of Tanjore (1774-1864) was both a noted singer, and a prolific composer of hymns for the purpose of worship in the Christian church. Abraham Pandithar (1859-1919) is known as the famous author of a large work in two volumes in Tamil containing much valuable information regarding the music of ancient Tamils, namely "Karunamrutha Sagaram". This book running over to more than 1300 pages is a treasure house of valuable information about Sruthis, Panns, Yazh and various aspects of classical music.

Hindustani art music had a new lease of life through contact with the Persian art. As a consequence of this, there grew a mixed style of Hindustani music, a hybrid growth of several cultures. This fact was noticed by the later Mohammedan rulers who were able to appreciate both Indian and Persian styles. As years went by, they felt that there should be an authoritative work to put the existing music on scientific basis.

Pundarika Vithala bears witness to this fact and he has given in his work an exact picture of the situation. It was King Burhankhan (1590-1599) who ordered Pundarika Vithala to write a book, welding the old and the new systems into an orderly system. Thus some of the notable monarchs such as Allauddin Khilji, Giasuddin Tughlak, Sultan Hussein Shirkee, Akbar, Shah Jehan, Mohammad Shah Rangeili of Delhi were great patrons of Indian art music and encouraged musicians who adorned the courts. Some of the rulers invited musicians from Iran. They came to India and were impressed by Indian art music. Hazarat Amir Khusru, who lived in the time of Khiljis and Giasuddin Tughlak is credited with the composition of a few ragas of both Indian and Iranian melodies. Some of the Ragas attributed to him are Bahar, Sajgiri, Sarpada, Paraj. The Raga thus acquired a wider definition. It shed some of its old rigidity and began absorbing some of the aspects of other melodic systems of music.

Music is one of the fine arts and it is

the finest of fine arts. No form of musical expression could be reckoned as waste or purposeless. We have ragas (melody) of different types capable of a thorough analysis on the basis of their tone and scale structure.

Isai Oli is called in Sanskrit as *Nadam*. It is a well known saying that God is in the form of music (*Nada Brahman*). In ancient Tamil literature God has been called the incarnation of sound and 'Ezhisai'. Because of the affinity between God and Music, the art of music is called the Divine Art.

There are two forms of music, namely, *Nibaddha* and *Anibaddha*. *Nibaddha* is composed music. It can be studied under various headings, according to different points of view, as for example, Pure and Applied, Arts and Folk, Sacred and Profane, Dance Music, Opera Music, etc. It is always set to time. *Anibaddha* which is not set to time consists of five musical sections namely, Alapana, Tana, Pallavi, Kalpana Swara and Neraval ie. in general it gives the exposition of Raga.

Today, Raga is a predominant concept in Indian art music. Practically every aspect of Indian art music pertains to Raga. It is an acknowledged fact that our Raga System is all embracing in character and it is hardly possible for any human genius to conceive of any scale at any time in any part of the world which would not fall within the ambit of our system of music. This statement is not only qualitatively true but also quantitatively true.

Music is a combination of Voice cultured music, Instrumental music and Dance. Thus say our ancient treatises:

गीतं वाद्यं नृत्यं त्रयं संगीतमुच्यते

It is a matter of common knowledge to all music lovers that Indian Classical

music has its origin in the Sama Veda. India's greatest cultural heritage is her Sangeeta (Music), which is considered to be an *Upaveda* and given the same respect that the Vedas receive. □

(To be continued....)

The Voice of the Guru

"Sama" denotes that which brings equipoise or tranquility to the mind. There are four well-known ways of dealing with an opponent or rival: *Sama*, *Daana*, *Bheda* and *Danda*. The first method is that of conciliation making an enemy a friend through affection. The Samaveda enables us to befriend the divine forces, even the Paramatman. How do we make a person happy? By praising him. If the panegyric is set to music and sung he would be doubly pleased. Many of the mantras of the Rgveda are intoned with a cadence in the Samaveda; thus we have Samagana. While the Rks are chanted with the tonal difference of Udaatta, Anudatta and Svarita, the Saamans are intoned musically according to certain rules. Our music, based on the seven notes (Saptasvaras) has its origin in Samaveda. All deities are pleased with Saamagana. We become recipients of their grace not only through the offerings made in the sacrificial fire but through the intoning of the Saamans by the Udgata*. Samagana is particularly important to some sacrifices in which the essence of the Soma plant is offered as oblation. Though the Samans are indeed Rgvedic mantras they are specially capable of pleasing the deities and creating Atmic uplift because they are intoned musically. This is what gives distinction to the Samaveda.

Sri Krishna says in the Gita : "*Vedaanaam Samavedosmi*" - Ch. 10, Verse 22 (Of the Vedas, I am the Samaveda). The Lord is everything, including good as well as bad. Even so, as he speaks to Arjuna about the things in which his divine quality specially shines forth, he mentions the Samaveda among them.

In the Lalita Sahasranamam, Amba has the name of "*Samagana Priya*" (One who delights in Samagana); she is not called "*Rgveda Priya*" or "*Yajurveda Priya*". Syama Sastri refers to Goddess Meenakshi as "*Samagana - Vinodini*" in one of his compositions - Sarojadala Netri in the Raga Shankarabharanam.

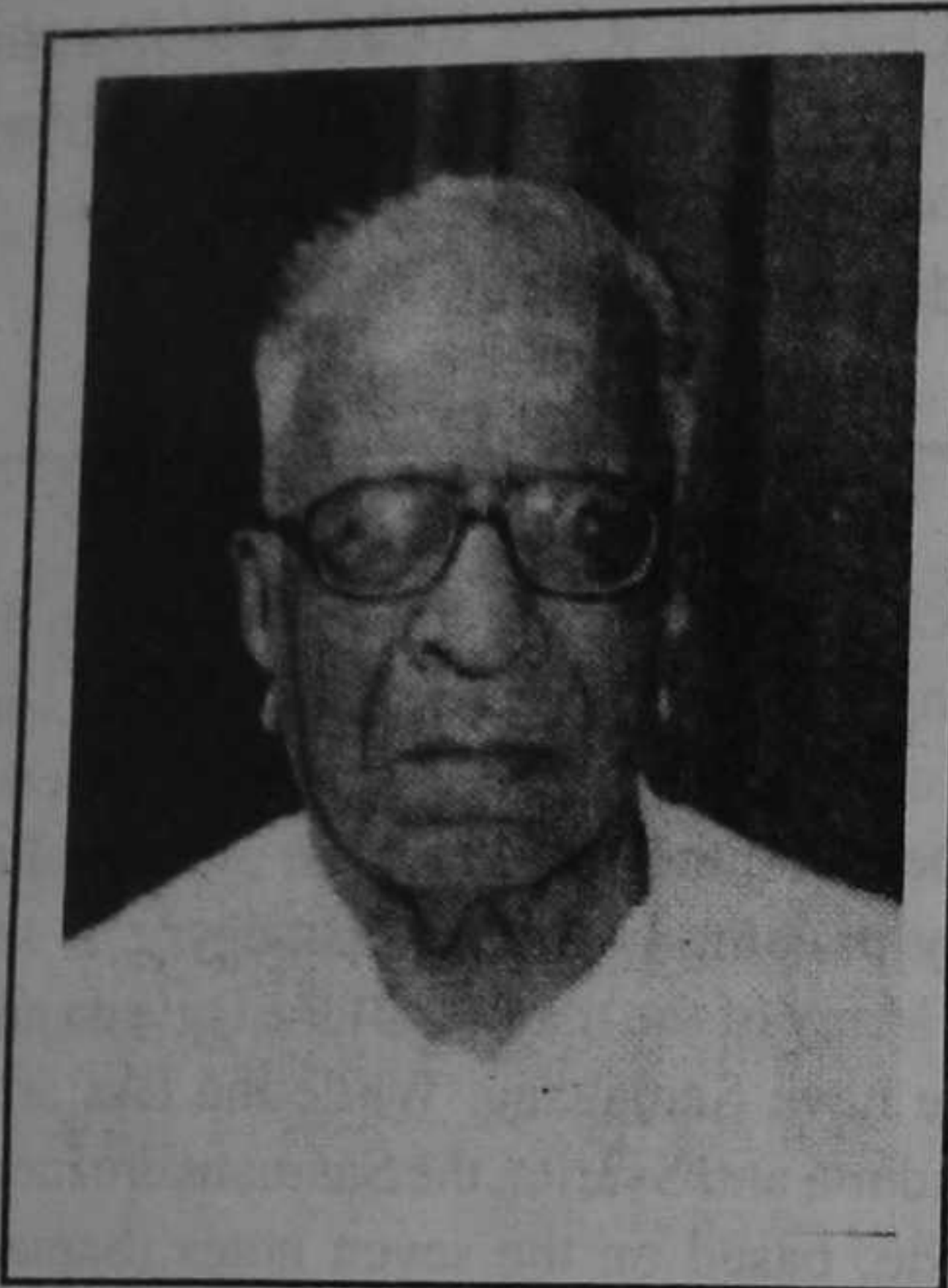
In the Siva - Ashtottaram, Siva is worshipped thus : "*Samapriyayai Namah*". The Tevaram extols Siva as one who keeps chanting the Chandoga Saman (*Chandoga Saman Odum Vaayaan*). Appayya Dikshithar has sought to establish that "Isvara or Siva, Amba and Vishnu are "*Ratna-trayee*" (the Three Gems) occupying the highest plane. And all three have a special relationship with the Supreme.

* The Samaveda Samhita contains the part called "Archika" of the Rgveda, and the part called "Gana". Gana is subdivided into "Krama Gana", "Aaranya Gana" and "Uhya Gana".

Courtesy: Pujyasri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swami in "*Hindu Dharma - The Universal Way of Life*", published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

OBITUARY

DR. V. SUBRAMANIAN



In the passing away of Dr. V. Subramanian, President Emeritus of the Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha, the Sabha has lost a personality who was of inestimable value to the Sabha. In particular, his contributions towards the rebuilding of the Shanmukhananda Hall which was destroyed in a devastating fire in 1990, can never be sufficiently overemphasised. Dr. Subramanian, born in 1919, joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1948 and held many distinguished positions both in the State and Central Governments. He was a Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from 1980 to 1990. He was also a Cabinet Minister of the Maharashtra State during 1982 - 83 and from 1985 - 1988 and held many important portfolios. He was also the Vice-President of the Bombay Regional

Congress Committee from 1983 to 1990. From 1975 to 2001, Dr. Subramanian was the President of the Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha. From 2001, he was the President Emeritus of the Sabha until his passing away. He has also been the Honorary Director of the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation from 1990, the Vice-Chairman of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and the Vice-President of the Indian Institute of Public Administration. Having presided over the destinies of our Sabha for nearly three decades, he was a beacon light in the cultural life of this city. In providing his advice and assistance he did not make any distinction between our Sabha and any other cultural organisation in the city. Many are the cultural institutions in this city which benefitted immensely from his guidance and help.

- P.N.Krishnamoorthy

DR. V. SUBRAMANIAN

26.1.1919 - 29.9.2003

This meeting convened by Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha jointly with Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Bajaj Foundation and Institutions of Fine Arts in Mumbai is deeply grieved to record the sad demise of Dr. V. Subramanian on Monday 29th September 2003. The shadow of gloom that envelopes this Auditorium which is a living testimony of his selfless efforts and the anguish and the grief in our hearts does constrain us from keeping our emotions away as we offer Shraddhanjali to one of the noblest souls of our times.

After serving the Indian Army, Dr. V. Subramanian joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Between 1948 and 1977, he held several high positions in both the State and Central Government. He was first elected to the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly in 1980 and held two full terms 1980-85 and 1985-90 in the Assembly. After a Cabinet Minister status appointment between 1980-82, he was appointed as Cabinet Minister in 1982. During the period 1982-83 and 1985-88, he virtually held the ministership of every important portfolio in the Cabinet.

The successive droughts in Maharashtra pained Dr. V. Subramanian. He applied himself to evolve long term strategies to combat drought and other natural calamities. He was seized of the drain on the State exchequer by natural calamities. "Parched Earth" published in 1975 manifested the best in him and reflected as to how painstakingly he worked to provide an effective management framework to combat drought. Such was the eminence of his study that it secured a D Litt. for him from the University of Mumbai.

Dr. V. Subramanian was the President of Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha for a continuous period of 27 years from 1975. Seldom has an individual merged his identity totally with the Institution and worked assiduously for its growth and development. As the devastating fire reduced the hall to ashes, he did not grieve, but saw in it an opportunity to rebuild the hall replete with all attendant infrastructure and extensive use of technology. His dream was realised when the renovated Auditorium was declared open on 1st November 1998. He leaves behind an Institution that stands tall as a monument of National Integration and Cultural Synthesis.

He was the Hon. Director of Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation from 1990 till his last. Between 1994 and 1998. He served as the trustee and Hon. Director of Yeshwantrao Chavan Pratisthan. He was the Vice-President of Indian Institute of Public Administration from 1990. In recent years his passion for Gandhian thoughts moved him to Gandhi Smarak Nidhi where he was the Vice-Chairman.

For six decades he served the Nation in various capacities. He discharged every function that came his way with distinction.

Eventhough he will not be in our midst in flesh and blood, his presence will always smoulder in our hearts and reflect in our deeds to keep the torch he lit alive forever.

May the soul rest in peace.

OBITUARY**Violin Vidwan Shri. T.S. Krishnaswamy**

The Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Vidyalaya has had its fair share of pre-eminent teachers and gurus. One such outstanding teacher is, without doubt, *Sangeetha Bhushanam* T.S. Krishnaswamy. He was born in the year 1909 and after initial training under his parents, obtained the "*Sangeetha Bhushanam*" degree of the Annamalai University in 1934. He served as teacher and headmaster at the Karnataka Sangeetha Sabha Music School from 1937 to 1941. He then established the Sri Krishna Music Academy in Mumbai and nurtured it from 1941 to 1974. On being offered the Professorship of Violin in the Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha Vidyalaya, he closed down his own institution moved lock stock and barrel along with his students to the Sabha's Vidyalaya. On retiring from the Vidyalaya, he settled down in Chennai where he passed away on 28.08.2003.

The singular characteristic that stood out in the outstanding teaching abilities of TSK was his success in evolving a method that combined the time honoured techniques of gurukulavasam with those of institutionalised teaching in the modern mould. In this context he says "I struck upon a three - phased approach to learning and practising music:- 1) learning as the Guru teaches,

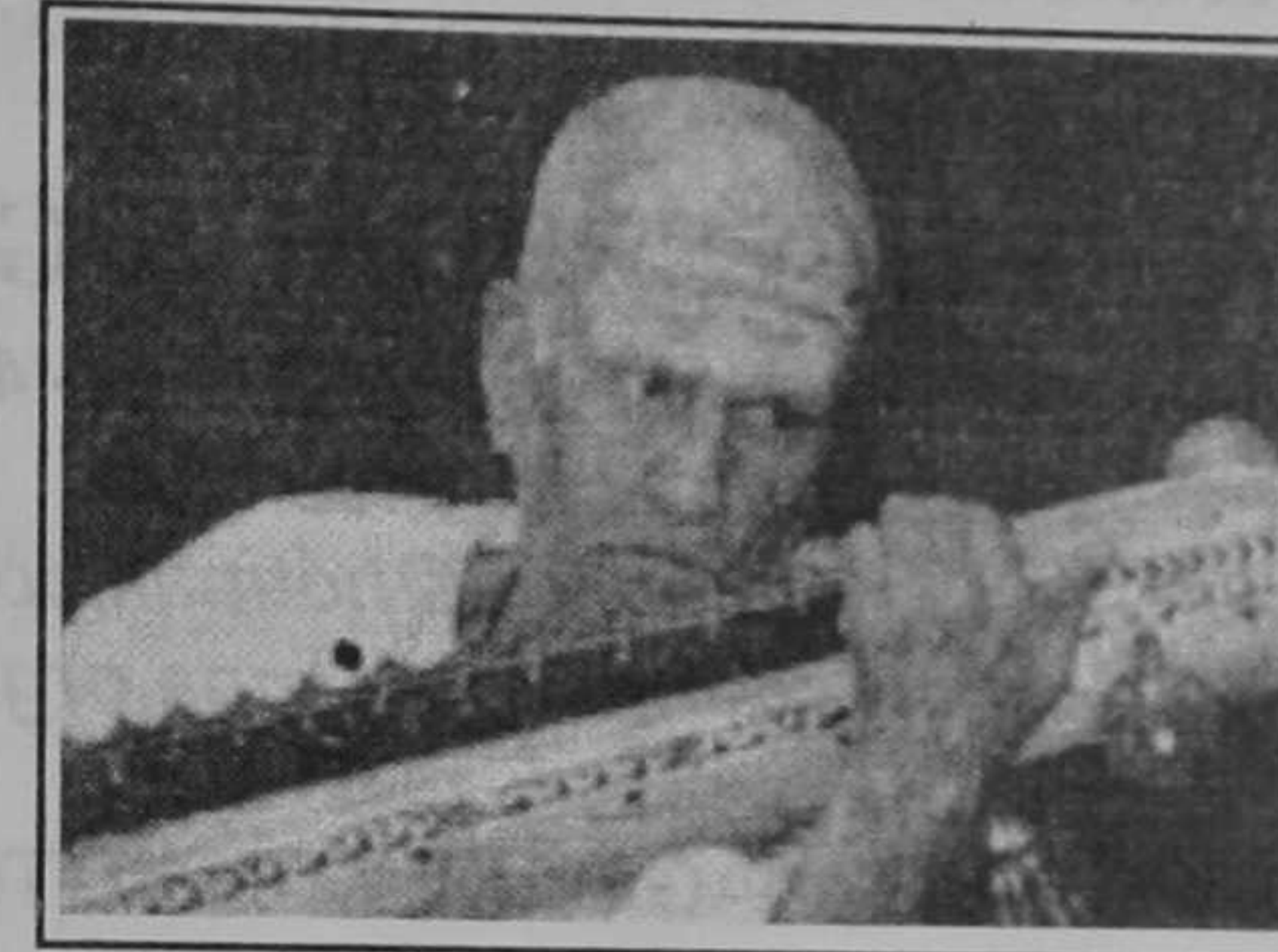


2) enjoying one's own rendition, and 3) analysing the melody, the nuances, diction and delineation of the Sahitya. I found vocal training a prerequisite for instrumentalists. Even today I guide my students on this formulae" He goes on to say "I have been teaching a group of students at a time, but I am not indifferent to their individual capabilities. I keep a watch over their individual receptivity, grasp and capacity to reproduce and correct them then and there. As for practicing and imbibing the style, I teach a song and revise it continuously for a number of months, say about six months, so that the students get it in their blood streams".

In these two statements we see the essential prerequisites of the current day institutionalised teaching methods. The Carnatic music world owes this great and dedicated teacher a deep debt of gratitude for his contribution to the modernisation of pedagogy in Carnatic music.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating and indeed the effectiveness of his approach is epitomised in the many star students his method has produced in the Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Vidyalaya - Ranjani and Gayatri and a host of others. Some of these students have been involved in the multi-violin ensembles of the famous violinist, A. Kanyakumari

- P.N. Krishnamoorthy

OBITUARY**Shri. K.P. Sivanandam**

The recent passing away of the renowned Veena artist Shri Sangeetha Kalandhi K.P. Sivanandam, brings in its wake memories of the significant contributions made by the Thanjavur Quartette in the fields of Vocal, Veena, Bharatanatyam and Musical Compositions. Shri. K.P. Sivanandam belongs to this distinguished lineage and is a seventh generation representative of this Quartette. He learnt Music and Bharatanatyam from his grandfather *Natyakalanidhi* Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram

Pillai and his father K. Ponnaiah Pillai. He learnt Veena playing from Desamangalam Subramania Ayyar and Gomathi Sankara Ayyar. His sweet playing, was characterised by strict adherence to tradition. Such felicity could only have been achieved through intense and painstaking sadhaka. His Veena recitals along with his wife Sarada Sivanandam evoked very favourable reactions from the cogniscenti in Carnatic Music. He was indeed one of the finest Veena players of his day.

- P.N. Krishnamoorthy



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